

THE STRAITS TIMES

Home Typhoon victims star in Chingay B6



World Uproar over journalist's arrest A10



Home On patrol with TransCom B2

Sport Top China players for S'pore Open C10



Substation failure causes hotel fire and power outage

Electricity supply to areas in Central Singapore, including Bugis, City Hall and Marina, was disrupted for around 12 minutes yesterday afternoon due to equipment failure at the substation serving Carlton Hotel.

It also caused a fire at the hotel, forcing the evacuation of 1,000 people, but no injuries were reported.

Energy provider SP Group, which apologised for the outage, said power supply was restored to most locations by 1.21pm.

Several MRT stations were affected, but train services continued as usual. SP Group said it is investigating the incident. The equipment had been inspected on Feb 1.

On Jan 26, a faulty voltage transformer started a fire at a substation in Bright Hill, causing power outage in areas in Ang Mo Kio, Bishan, Sin Ming, Toa Payoh and Thomson.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A4



Power outage affected several MRT stations in Central Singapore, including Clarke Quay (above). But train services were not disrupted. Electricity supply to most locations was restored by 1.21pm, after around 12 minutes of outage. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

US-China trade truce could be extended by 60 days

The current truce in the ongoing trade war between China and the United States could be extended for another 60 days to give negotiators more time to reach a deal.

US President Donald Trump is reported to be considering pushing back the March 1 deadline when Washington is due to raise tariffs from the current 10 per cent to 25 per cent on US\$200 billion (\$271 billion) of Chinese goods.

News of the possible extension came as US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin were in Beijing for talks with Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He. The talks looked likely to be the last before the deadline.

Meanwhile, despite the ongoing trade tensions, China yesterday reported a surprising recovery in its trade numbers last month.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A5

Singapore attracts \$10.9b in investments, beating forecast

Investment levels similar to 2018 eyed this year, with EDB looking to grow new industry clusters

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

Singapore exceeded its forecast for investment commitments last year – attracting \$10.9 billion – and the Economic Development Board (EDB) is looking to sustain similar investment levels this year.

Despite a slowing global economy amid trade tensions between the United States and China, Singapore

again expects to draw between \$8 billion and \$10 billion in fixed-asset investments this year – the same forecast it made last year and surpassed.

Self-driving cars bearing a “Made in Singapore” stamp are among initiatives that could add to this push.

There is resilience in the country’s investment pipeline, EDB chairman Beh Swan Gin said yesterday, pointing to Asean’s growth potential and Singapore’s international standing as factors that help

ensure it will continue to attract a fair share of investments.

A significant dampening of global sentiment is a potential pitfall. But EDB managing director Chng Kai Fong said that despite uncertainties, “investment decisions are made over the longer term”.

The number of jobs created this year is projected to stay between 16,000 and 18,000, said Mr Chng. This is the same as the projected range last year and a few thousand less than the figure two years ago.

At the EDB’s year-in-review yesterday, he also noted that last year, EDB secured investment commitments that met or exceeded fore-

casts for all indicators.

Singapore attracted \$10.9 billion in fixed-asset investment, exceeding the predicted range of \$8 billion to \$10 billion, with electronics accounting for close to 30 per cent.

When fully implemented, these projects will create about 17,400 new jobs – which is within the forecast of 16,000 to 18,000 positions.

Industries likely to bring larger numbers of jobs include research and development, as well as engineering and environmental services, according to EDB figures.

Projects are also expected to contribute \$13.6 billion in value-add a year, compared with the \$17.2 bil-

lion for those committed in 2017.

The total business expenditure per annum for projects last year was \$6.2 billion, within EDB’s forecast of \$5 billion to \$7 billion. The forecast range remains the same for this year.

Dr Beh said: “The 2018 investment commitment numbers are testament to Singapore’s continued strength as a global business city and a hub for manufacturing.”

In the coming year, EDB is setting its sights on Singapore taking the lead in developing and deploying autonomous vehicles and smart mobility systems, riding the crest of Dyson’s recent announcement that it will build its first electric vehicle manufacturing plant here.

“Technology, in part driven by digitalisation, has now changed the economics of the game, and some of the industries which were not viable in the past... are becoming more viable,” said Mr Chng, adding that this includes agrifood.

“We are looking to grow new industry clusters... It is not just the deployment of technology or electric vehicles, but really the ecosystem surrounding it,” he said.

Spelling out its other priorities, EDB said that against the backdrop of global trade tensions, Singapore has an opportunity to become a platform for Asean where global and regional companies do business.

EDB will also seek to strengthen Singapore’s competitive edge in advanced manufacturing by attracting leading businesses to invest here, and help firms export technologies and services. The agency will also support non-manufacturing firms in digital transformation.

Another priority is to help firms looking to create new products, services and businesses, and support them to scale out of Singapore.

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6



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1 Books to push integration
The Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (Minds) has launched the first in a series of six illustrated children's books. The books are to promote greater integration between mainstream schoolchildren and children with special needs. Therapy dogs were brought to Fernvale Gardens School as part of the launch.

HOME B4

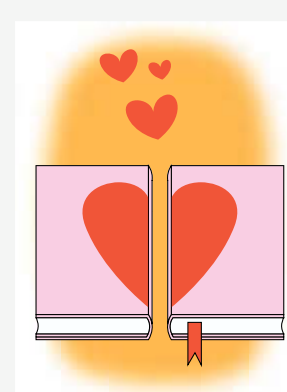


PHOTO:
REUTERS

VIDEO

Hangout with ST

Topics include the Chinese student in the Philippines who faces deportation for throwing pudding at a police officer; The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2018 winner; and Valentine's Day. <http://str.sg/hangout51>



PODCAST

Ahead of Valentine's Day, we received more than 150 entries from readers telling their stories of love in 200 words or fewer. Journalists Olivia Ho and Melissa Sim read six of their favourite pieces. <http://str.sg/lifepicks22>

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A 7-Eleven shop at Clarke Quay MRT station was affected by yesterday's power outage. While the trains continued to run, some stations on the North East Line, including Clarke Quay, experienced blackouts. The power outage, lasting from 1.09pm to 1.21pm, was later linked to the fire. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Lunchtime power outage hits shops, eateries, train stations

Power cut off in areas including City Hall and Bugis after hotel substation glitch causes fire

Choo Yun Ting and Ng Huiwen

First, equipment failed at a substation supplying power at Carlton Hotel yesterday. Then, a fire forced the evacuation of around 1,000 people from the Bras Basah building, while lights went out in parts of Bugis, City Hall, Marina and Somerset.

Shops and restaurants at places such as Chijmes, Plaza Singapura and The Gateway were hit as power was cut off a little after 1pm.

While the trains continued to run, stations on the North East Line – HarbourFront, Outram Park, Chinatown, Clarke Quay, Dhoby Ghaut, Boon Keng and Potong Pasir – were also affected by blackouts.

The power outage, which lasted for 12 minutes from 1.09pm to 1.21pm, was later linked to the fire.

Equipment failure at the electrical substation at Carlton Hotel had led to the power outage and an electricity flashover, or an abnormal electrical discharge. This flashover caused the fire at the hotel.

Yesterday's incident was the second time in two months that a power outage has occurred. Last month, a fire at a substation in Bright Hill led to a power outage which caused electricity cuts in homes in Bishan, Toa Payoh and Shunfu. Lifts and traffic lights in the area were also affected.

SP Group, apologising on its Facebook page to those affected by the latest power outage, said the equipment failure at the substation had occurred even though the equipment had been inspected less than two weeks ago on Feb 1.

"Taken together with the incident at the Bright Hill substation on Jan 26, we will conduct a thorough investigation of both incidents," it added.

The Energy Market Authority is also investigating the incident. "Depending on the outcome of our investigations, we will decide on the appropriate action to take against any party found to be responsible for the disruption," it said. "We apologise for the inconvenience caused."

SBS Transit said the power outage at its North East Line stations was due to a dip in the power grid network, and emergency lights had to be turned on. According to SMRT, some escalators at Dhoby Ghaut and City Hall MRT stations stopped running briefly as well.

Ms Mabeline Chea, manager of Lei Garden in Chijmes, said that at 1.10pm, the lights went out, the air-conditioning stopped working and power for kitchen appliances was cut off, affecting the lunchtime crowd. "The customers were surprised when the lights went out, but they continued eating. Some asked if it was a Valentine's Day prank," she said.

Architectural assistant Christie Lee, who works at The Gateway West, said that almost all the lifts stopped working during the electricity supply cut, along with the lights and air-conditioning.

Power was fully restored at Carlton Hotel only just after 6.30pm.

"Our officers were immediately deployed to the affected areas and our priority is to restore supply as safely and quickly as possible," SP Group said on Facebook at 2.36pm.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force responded to the fire at Carlton Hotel at around 1.15pm.

The fire was contained within the substation on the ground floor of the hotel. No injuries were reported.

Professor Subodh Gautam Mhaisalkar, executive director of the Energy Research Institute at Nanyang Technological University, told The Straits Times that a substation is usually used for regulating voltage, and functions as a node in the power grid.

An interruption or disruption in a substation can result in a domino effect, causing a power surge or service interruption, such as what happened yesterday, he added.

Prof Subodh, however, believes that yesterday's power outage was an isolated incident. "Our power quality and performance in Singapore continue to be very high as compared to most developed countries," he said.

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• Additional reporting by Shabana Begum and Joy Pang



Smoke wafting from a room at the back of Carlton Hotel in Bras Basah Road yesterday afternoon. The fire was contained within the substation on the ground floor of the hotel, and no injuries were reported. ST PHOTO: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY



Guests and hotel staff outside Carlton Hotel, where around 1,000 people were evacuated. Power was fully restored at the hotel just after 6.30pm.

Below: Asia Grand Restaurant at Odeon Towers, next to Carlton Hotel, was one of the restaurants hit by the power cuts. ST PHOTOS: SAHIBA CHAUDHARY



Equipment failure at substation caused fire, power outage

Smoke wafted from a room at the back of Carlton Hotel in Bras Basah Road yesterday afternoon, with witnesses saying they heard several loud explosions from the premises.

The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) told The Straits Times that it responded to the fire at 1.15pm.

Electricity and gas supply company SP Group later confirmed that equipment failure at the substation serving Carlton Hotel led to an electricity flashover, or an abnormal electrical discharge. The flashover caused the fire.

The equipment failure also caused a power outage in several parts of central Singapore.

While supply was restored to most areas by 1.21pm, the hotel remained affected until 6.34pm.

In a Facebook post, Carlton Hotel said that no part of the hotel was damaged as the fire was contained within the substation.

"As the SP substation is located on the ground floor of our hotel, for the safety of all our guests, we initiated an evacuation of everyone in the building," the hotel said.

"We apologise for the inconvenience caused."

Public relations executive Jonathan Lim, 32, who was in Odeon Towers, which is next to the hotel, said that the lights and the air-conditioning in his building were affected by the outage.

He went out of the building and saw smoke coming out from a door at the back of Carlton Hotel.

The door appeared to lead to a room containing power supply equipment, he said.

"I was a bit shocked and alarmed. We saw some metal on the floor near the area," Mr Lim said.

There was also a strong smell of burning plastic, he added.

Onlookers told him that they heard an explosion earlier.

He later heard a second explosion as he was waiting outside the building.

Photos of the incident showed two fire engines and several SCDF officers at the scene.

In an update on Facebook at 3.15pm, SCDF said that the fire was contained within a switch room and about 1,000 people were evacuated from the building.

The fire was put out using extinguishers, and there were no reported injuries, SCDF said.

Ng Huiwen and Choo Yun Ting

While supply was restored to most areas by 1.21pm, the hotel remained affected until 6.34pm.

HIGH STANDARD

Our power quality and performance in Singapore continue to be very high as compared to most developed countries.



PROFESSOR SUBODH GAUTAM
MHAISALKAR, executive director of the Energy Research Institute at NTU.

Trump open to extending US-China trade truce, says report

US leader said to be open to pushing back March 1 deadline if both sides are close to deal

Chong Koh Ping
China Correspondent
In Shanghai

The truce in the trade war between the United States and China could be extended for another 60 days from March 1, it was reported yesterday. The report by Bloomberg News coincided with the start of what looked like the last round of talks between both sides before the

deadline for further punitive tariffs kicks in. Citing people familiar with the matter, Bloomberg News quoted US President Donald Trump as saying on Tuesday that he was open to pushing back the deadline if both countries were close to a deal, though he added that he was not inclined to do so. It appeared that Mr Trump was willing to give negotiators more time to continue.



United States Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and Chinese Vice-Premier and lead trade negotiator Liu He greeting each other before the start of trade negotiations in Beijing yesterday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Washington is due to increase tariffs from the current 10 per cent to 25 per cent on US\$200 billion (S\$271 billion) worth of Chinese goods by March 1 if no agreement is reached on the bilateral trade dispute. US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin are in Beijing for two-days of high-level talks with Chinese Vice-Premier Liu He. Mr Lighthizer is tentatively scheduled to meet Chinese Presi-

dent Xi Jinping today at the end of the talks. Yesterday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying said Beijing hoped to reach a mutually beneficial deal with the US as it would directly affect the future development and stability of the world's economy. "The best thing we can do now is to let the work teams of both sides calm down and concentrate on this consultation and strive to achieve a

mutually beneficial and win-win outcome that both sides can accept," she told reporters at a regular media briefing. Apart from addressing the trade imbalance between them, the US wants China to make structural changes to its trade and industrial policies, including putting a stop to what it has charged was intellectual property theft and heavy subsidies of state-owned enterprises. Washington has demanded "on-

going verification and effective enforcement" of reforms in such areas. When asked if Beijing would agree to such a request, Chinese Commerce Ministry spokesman Gao Feng said yesterday that he understood it to be "speculation" of what was going on at the talks. The ministry would inform the media of "the exact situation" in due course, he added. Meanwhile, despite the ongoing trade tensions, China yesterday reported a surprising recovery in its trade numbers for January. Last month, exports grew 9.1 per cent year on year, up from the 4.4 per cent decline registered in December, and imports contracted by 1.5 per cent. In December, imports declined by 7.6 per cent. Bilateral trade between China and the US, however, continued to take a beating, with Chinese exports to the US down 2 per cent, while imports from the US plunged a whopping 41 per cent. China's trade surplus with the US narrowed to US\$27.3 billion last month from US\$29.9 billion in December. Most analysts believe both sides want to avoid any further escalation in trade tensions. "Based on the positive signals from the US-China trade negotiations, further tariff hikes will likely be suspended," said Mr Louis Kuijs, head of Asia economics at Oxford Economics, a Hong Kong-based consulting firm. UOB analysts wrote in a note that a more comprehensive trade deal may not materialise until the second half of this year. "Which may mean a further extension may be on the cards," they said.

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Trump and Xi expected to meet face to face on trade next month

WASHINGTON • United States President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping are expected to meet next month, a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) official has said, as the two countries try to hammer out a deal to end a tit-for-tat tariff battle.

The presidents are expected to meet "some time in March", USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Censky said at a renewable fuels industry conference on Wednesday. But no dates have been set for the meeting as yet, he said. Mr Trump has said that he does

not expect to meet Mr Xi prior to March 1, but White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders has raised the possibility of a meeting between the leaders at the President's personal retreat at Mar-a-Lago, Florida. They are the "only two" who can nail down a comprehensive trade

deal between the two countries, Ms Sanders said on Fox News. Asked whether the Trump-Xi meeting will take place at Mar-a-Lago, Ms Sanders replied: "It certainly could be; it would be a great venue." Chinese Foreign Ministry

spokesman Hua Chunying said she noted that Mr Trump had said many times he wished to meet Mr Xi, and that China was willing to maintain "close contact" with the US side. However, she added that she had no information to share on any visit by Mr Xi.

Mr Trump's advisers have previously described March 1 as a "hard deadline" for the US and China to reach a deal on trade. Ms Sanders on Wednesday also told Fox News that the final agreement depends on Mr Trump and Mr Xi meeting in person. A deal between China and the United States "will ultimately take... President Trump and President Xi sitting down face to face", the White House Press Secretary said. REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

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Budget to focus on how firms can raise productivity

Emphasis on training and upgrading workers, improving workplace capabilities and embracing tech, says Heng

Sue-Ann Tan

The Budget will focus on how companies can increase productivity and stay competitive, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat.

This will involve, in part, an emphasis on improving capabilities in the workplace and getting companies to embrace technology.

Mr Heng, who was speaking during a tour of the FairPrice distribution centre in Benoi yesterday, noted: "I hope to see (companies) putting big emphasis on training and upgrading our workers."

"As we redesign jobs, we will need to help workers learn new skills, and I think in that way, companies can be more competitive and, at the same time, workers can be more productive and enjoy better jobs and better pay."

Mr Heng also encouraged businesses and workers to embrace technology: "Our ability to master the new technology will be key to a better life for the future."

These moves will also help businesses to seize opportunities growing in the region.

He cited the distribution centre as an example of how enterprises can use technology to lift productivity. "FairPrice has worked together with the workers to retrain them. Many of them told me they started when FairPrice had manual processes, but they were able to pick up new skills along the way," Mr Heng said.

"All enterprises will need to put this as a major priority so they can make best use of new technologies and our companies can... continue to raise productivity and create a better life for our workers."

The FairPrice distribution centre is the first in the region to integrate automated storage and caddy pick systems in its operations.

The warehouse has a storage ca-

capacity of more than 52,000 pallets and the ability to process up to 120,000 cartons a day.

Pallets of goods can be transported automatically in and out of a storage rack comprising 19 levels. The system can receive up to 380 pallets an hour instead of the usual 120 in a conventional warehouse.

This is integrated with a system where autonomous machines sort pallets according to colour, allowing orders to be fulfilled without needing staff to operate forklifts or handheld equipment. The carriers also autonomously consolidate recyclable packaging, which will be sent to recycling centres.

Pallets and roll cages carrying goods are also tracked using radio frequency identification technology so the right orders are delivered to stores at the right time.

There is an AutoStore system for e-commerce orders that functions as a huge vending machine to automatically store and dispense thousands of products to the picking bay.

Mr Heng added: "With our industry transformation efforts, we have to look at new technologies, given that traditional businesses like retail need to be transformed."

Companies can achieve much higher productivity with better processes and provide goods at competitive prices.

He said that businesses can also create partnerships around the world so that they can gain and achieve "the best possible results for companies and workers".

Mr Heng added that the Budget will also contain key measures on social policy, the Merdeka Generation Package and the bicentennial. "It is a major event, and I hope we reflect on the past so that we can plan for a better future," he noted.

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SEE OPINION A22



Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat chatting with Autostore picker Norliati Othman, 37, at the FairPrice distribution centre in Benoi. Beside him is FairPrice CEO Seah Kian Peng. The centre is the first in the region to integrate automated storage and caddy pick systems. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

BUDGET 2019

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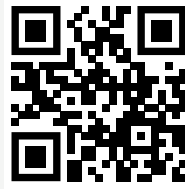
Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will deliver the Budget statement on Monday at 3.30pm

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Singapore sets sights on becoming Asean's business centre

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

When software engineer Lim Jing Yee moved back to Singapore from Silicon Valley more than a decade ago to help roll out Google Maps in the region, it was growing rapidly in Internet adoption.

"The market was growing like crazy... People came online, they

needed to use maps, and so the company decided to set up an engineering presence here to focus on some of this work, and to bring maps to Singapore and Malaysia," the 48-year-old told The Straits Times.

In the past 11 years, he has seen the Republic take on some characteristics of Silicon Valley for technology and innovation, with its skilled workforce and connectivity.

These, on top of Singapore's



Software engineer Lim Jing Yee moved back here over a decade ago to help roll out Google Maps in the region.

proximity to growing markets in Asean, add to Singapore's value proposition, Economic Develop-

ment Board (EDB) managing director Chng Kai Fong said yesterday.

Becoming Asean's business centre and continuing Singapore's push towards an innovation-led economy are among the EDB's main priorities for this year.

Google's presence here has grown, and more firms, including online payments firm Stripe, have also set up engineering centres here, underscoring Asean's global rise.

"Rather than adding a couple of hundred more engineers in San Francisco or London, we can offer something different," said Mr Chng.

"It will be a different culture, different environment, growth opportunities... proximity to newer markets. That is essentially the value proposition for Singapore."

But there is work ahead for Singapore if it wants to be where the world does business with Asean, he

said. This includes understanding how Singapore can play a role in the Asean operations of companies.

Asean's growth opportunities come amid trade tensions and potential diversions of supply chains from China. Mr Chng noted that, at first, firms are likely to start by using their spare capacities in the region, rather than make large investments.

EDB chairman Beh Swan Gin added that this is a diversification and not relocation, given the size of the Chinese economy, although the region stands to benefit from it.

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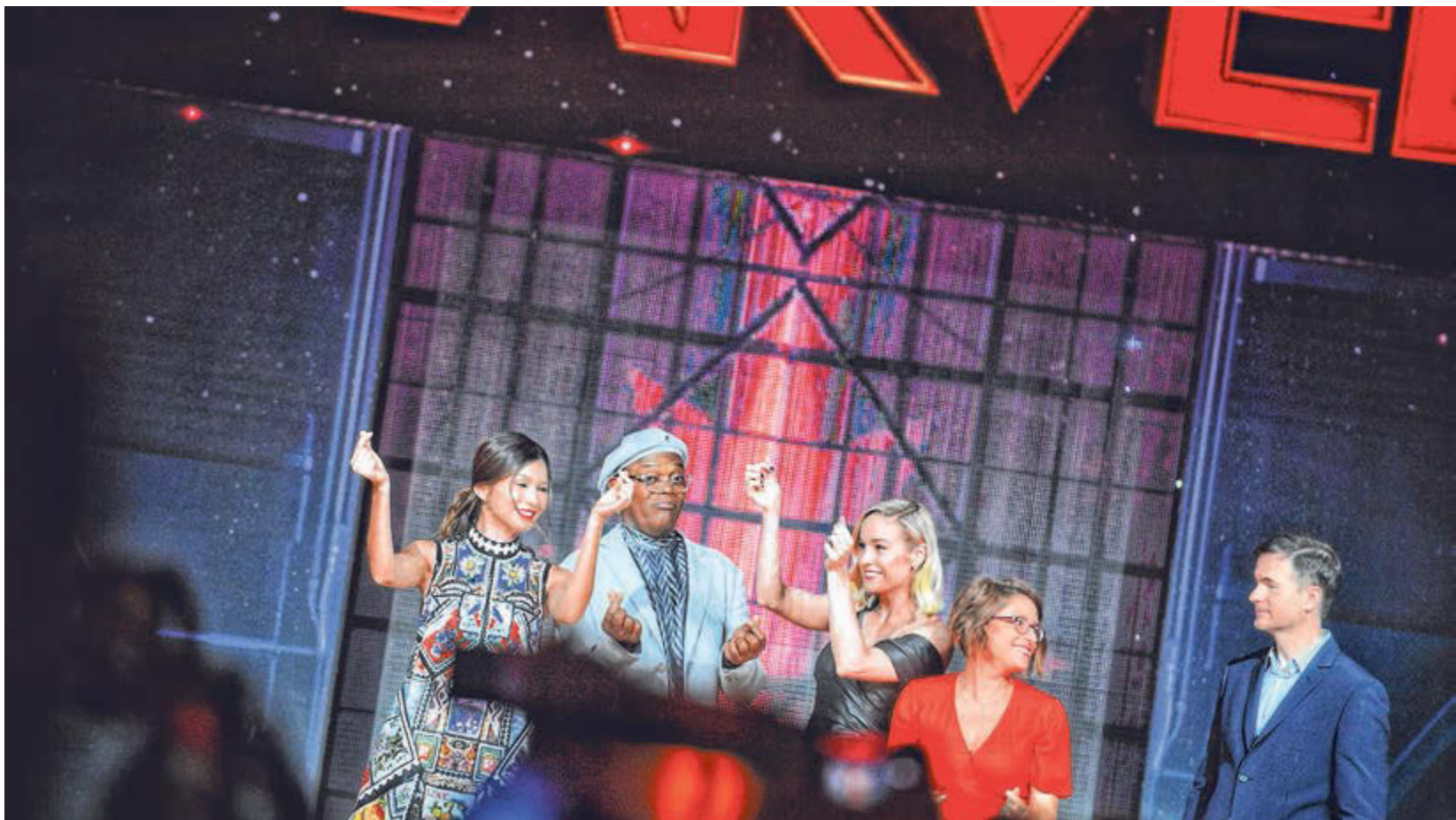


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Captain Marvel stars wow fans in S'pore



Above: Actresses Brie Larson (left) and Gemma Chan, shown here in an Instagram post from Singapore, are visiting the Republic as part of the Captain Marvel cast's global publicity tour. PHOTO: GEMMA CHAN/INSTAGRAM

Left: (From far left) Chan, Samuel L. Jackson and Larson at yesterday's fan event at Marina Bay Sands. Besides meeting fans, some of the stars also visited well-known eateries and attractions here like Gardens by the Bay and Newton Food Centre. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

They shake hands, take selfies and give autographs to 800 at event to promote film

Ng Huiwen and Jan Lee

A busy schedule for the stars of Hollywood's latest superhero flick Captain Marvel ended with a treat for fans at Marina Bay Sands.

Brie Larson, who plays the title character and was dressed in a black jumpsuit with a Captain Marvel brooch pinned to her back, was joined by co-stars Samuel L. Jackson, and Gemma Chan of Crazy Rich Asians fame.

They took selfies, shook hands and gave autographs to some 800 lucky fans who turned up for the free event.

As the star of Marvel's first female-led film, Larson said: "So many superhero movies are about getting to something or saving something, but this (movie) is about her getting to herself and the journey of finding herself."

She had announced her arrival in Singapore with a photo of herself jumping in her hotel room posted on Instagram on Wednesday night.

"I'm in Singapore for the first time and loving it!!" wrote the 29-year-old, who in 2015 won Oscar for Best Actress for her role in Room, as a young woman held in captivity.

By then, she had already visited well-known eateries and attractions here, including Peranakan restaurant Guan Hoe Soon, where she indulged in buah keluak, assam fish, otah and chendol for lunch, the ArtScience Museum, Gardens by the Bay and Newton Food Centre, where she went with Chan, 36.

Chan, who also had several posts on her Instagram stories through the day, even shared a photo of their nearly empty Tiger beer tower. In another photo, she posed with a satay stick and captioned it: "So. Good."

Earlier, she also posted photos of Marina Bay Sands and its famed infinity pool at sunset.

Meanwhile, Jackson, 70, who plays Nick Fury in the film, shared a video of his plane heading for Singapore on Wednesday. He tagged the location as "somewhere in the South China Sea", and said: "Gooooood morning Singapore!! #captainmarvel#81feelslike87at8am".

Singapore is the first stop of the cast's global publicity tour for the film and also its only Asian stop. Captain Marvel premieres on March 7.

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SEE LIFE D8

Singapore is the first stop of the cast's global publicity tour for the film and also its only Asian stop. Captain Marvel premieres on March 7.

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Digital defence to be sixth pillar of Total Defence

Addition of new pillar after 35 years signals the threat posed by cyber attacks and disinformation

Hariz Baharudin

The Republic will introduce digital defence as the sixth pillar in its national defence framework Total Defence, signalling the threat cyber attacks and disinformation pose, and the importance of cyber security.

It is the first time a new pillar has been added to the framework since it was launched 35 years ago.

In his annual Total Defence Day message yesterday, Defence Minis-

ter Ng Eng Hen stressed that cyber-security threats and disinformation are a serious danger to Singapore, and emphasised the need to be vigilant against them. "Security threats can be real and physical like terrorism or, just as damaging, can come through the cyberworld."

"Malicious malware can cripple our systems. Fake news can cause racial riots and divide our people," added Dr Ng in his message, which was uploaded on Facebook.

The digital defence pillar will be officially launched today by Communications and Information Minister S. Iswaran, who is also the Minister-in-charge of Cyber Security. It joins the other five pillars of Total Defence: military, civil, economic, social and psychological defence.

NEW DANGERS

Malicious malware can cripple our systems. Fake news can cause racial riots and divide our people.



DEFENCE MINISTER NG ENG HEN

In his speech, Dr Ng reiterated that the purpose of Total Defence Day, which falls on Feb 15, is to remember the Japanese Occupation.

On Feb 15, 1942, the British surrendered Singapore to the Japanese, who occupied the country until Sept 12, 1945.

"Our parents and grandparents suffered in the 3½ years of deprivation and humiliation that followed.

"We remember those events of the Japanese Occupation to teach every new generation of Singaporeans about the price of failure to defend this country," he said.

Total Defence was launched in 1984 as a national defence initiative to rally all citizens behind the Singapore Armed Forces during wartime. It was also envisaged to build a sense of determination for Singaporeans to defend the country under all circumstances.

The framework has since undergone reviews and changes, but this is the first time a pillar outside of the original five conceptualised is being added.

Total Defence is now contextualised to address new threats, and applied to address non-military challenges too, such as economic

recessions, pandemics and natural disasters.

Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing also commemorated Total Defence Day yesterday at an inaugural Maritime Nation Forum held at the Singapore Maritime Gallery.

After leading a pledge recitation, he held a dialogue with about 100 forum participants on the challenges that Singapore faces as a maritime nation.

He noted that it was the first time professionals from the maritime industry, Republic of Singapore Navy servicemen and tertiary students were coming together to mark Total Defence Day.

Emphasising the importance of the national defence framework, he said: "When there are external pressures on our country to give in to external demands, Singaporeans must continue to be psychologically resilient and stay together to keep Singapore strong."

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• Additional reporting by Adrian Lim

SEE OPINION A20

Facebook removes Brochez's accounts, citing policy violations

Hariz Baharudin

Facebook has removed the accounts of Mikhy Farrera Brochez, the American at the centre of the HIV Registry data leak, The Straits Times has learnt.

ST understands that Facebook removed his accounts due to policy violations and that the move was not related to a government request.

His accounts went against the social media giant's privacy policy on sharing other people's medical information and its bullying policy, which disallows claims of sexual activity with named private individuals.

In response to ST's queries, a Facebook spokesman said yesterday: "We want everyone using Facebook to feel safe. That is why we

have Community Standards which outline what stays up and what comes down.

"Under these policies, we remove content or accounts that share medical information on others, and any content that poses a credible threat of harm to others. The consequences for breaching our Community Standards vary, depending on the severity of the breach."

Brochez had at least two Facebook accounts that have since been deleted.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) revealed on Jan 28 that Brochez got hold of the details of 14,200 people diagnosed with HIV here since 1985, and leaked the data.

Health Minister Gan Kim Yong gave a ministerial statement in Parliament on Tuesday, explaining how the data had fallen into Brochez's



Facebook said Mikhy Farrera Brochez's two accounts went against its policies on privacy and bullying.

hands, the events leading up to Brochez leaking the information online, and the steps the authorities have since taken to plug the leak.

On Wednesday morning, Brochez had made several posts where he claimed, among other things, that he was abused while in police custody; that he was sexually assaulted while in prison and contracted HIV only then; that he was denied HIV medication while in jail; and that the HIV Registry was leaked by another person.

Later on Wednesday, the Government denied the allegations.

An MOH statement said the matter had been thoroughly investigated by both the ministry and the police, but Brochez "continues to make allegations which are either false or unsubstantiated".

A joint statement from the Singa-

pore Police Force and the Singapore Prison Service said Brochez had been tried and found guilty by the Singapore courts and was accorded due legal process.

"He has now made baseless allegations about the investigations as well as against the police and prisons. His actions have shown him to be a pathological liar," the statement said. "Nevertheless, we welcome him to come back to Singapore to assist with police investigations."

In November last year, Facebook said it does not have a policy that prohibits alleged fake news, following calls to remove a post that contained an article that had made allegations against Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and the Government in relation to the 1Malaysia Development Berhad scandal.

The social media giant refused to take down the post by sociopolitical website States Times Review, which had a link to the article on its website.

In response to queries from ST then on why it had not acceded to the request, a Facebook spokesman said it had a responsibility to handle any government request to restrict alleged misinformation "carefully and thoughtfully", and that this was consistent with its approach to government requests elsewhere.

The spokesman added then that Facebook does not have a policy that prohibits alleged falsehoods, "apart from in situations where this content has the potential to contribute to imminent violence or physical harm".

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Love is in the air



Love was in full bloom yesterday at the Registry of Marriages (ROM) as many couples chose to tie the knot on Valentine's Day, including (left) Mr Pang Sze Hou, 36, and Ms Wu Xuele, 28, and (below) Mr Suresh Naidu and Ms Suppiah Praba, both 35. ROM said 87 non-Muslim couples tied the knot yesterday – the highest number of solemnisations on Valentine's Day since 2016, when 66 couples said "I do".

ST PHOTOS: KHALID BABA



40 Indian military personnel killed in Kashmir blast

SRINAGAR (India) • At least 40 Indian security force personnel were killed yesterday and many more injured in the most serious terrorist attack to occur since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power.

They died when an improvised explosive device went off as a convoy of military vehicles drove along a highway outside Srinagar, the main city of Jammu and Kashmir state, Asian News International reported.

Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) Deputy Inspector-General M. Dhinakaran confirmed that at least one bus carrying 39 passengers was attacked as the convoy – which consisted of 77 vehicles and about 2,500 personnel – travelled through Pulwama district, 35km outside Srinagar.

Investigations were continuing into the exact number of dead and injured, he said.

CRPF spokesman Sanjay Kumar said the explosives were inside a car, while local media reports said the explosive-laden vehicle was driven into the convoy.

"It was a powerful explosion. The explosive was car-borne," the spokesman said.

Unconfirmed photos showed the charred remains of at least one vehicle littered across the highway alongside military buses as black smoke billowed upwards.

Local media said the Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammed Islamist group had claimed responsibility for the attack.

A spokesman for the group said the "suicide attack" was carried out by a militant called Aadil Ahmad, alias Waqas Commando, in a statement sent to local media.

The last major car bombing, which killed 40 people – including three suicide attackers – was also carried out by Jaish-e-Mohammed, in 2001. The target of that attack was Srinagar's Parliament building.

Mr Modi condemned the latest attack, which he described as "despicable" in a tweet. "The sacrifices of our brave security personnel shall not go in vain," he said.

Government minister Arun Jaitley said in a tweet that those responsible "will be given an unforgettable lesson for their heinous act".

Yesterday's attack was the deadliest on Indian forces in the country's part of Kashmir since September 2016, when 19 soldiers were killed in a pre-dawn raid by militants on the Uri army camp.

India blamed militants in Pakistan for that attack, the biggest in 14 years, and responded by carrying out strikes across the heavily militarised Line of Control, the de facto border dividing the nuclear-armed nations.

India has an estimated 500,000 soldiers in Kashmir, which has been divided between India and Pakistan since independence from Britain in 1947. Both countries claim the disputed territory in full.

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WORLD



ANWAR IBRAHIM
PKR LEADER EXPECTS
TO BECOME MALAYSIA
PM IN LESS THAN
TWO YEARS **A14**



Rights activists protesting over the detention of journalist Maria Ressa in front of the National Bureau of Investigation office in Manila yesterday. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Duterte critic freed on bail after arrest sparks outcry



Philippine journalist and Rappler CEO Maria Ressa speaking to reporters after posting bail at a court in Manila yesterday. The veteran reporter, who spent a night in detention, stumped up a bond of \$2,600, the sixth time since December that she has paid bail on a government case. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Philippine journalist and news site accused of libel after clashing repeatedly with govt

MANILA • Philippine journalist Maria Ressa was freed on bail yesterday following an arrest that sparked international censure and allegations that she is being tar-

geted over her news site's criticism of President Rodrigo Duterte. Ressa, 55, had spent a night in detention after the authorities arrested the veteran reporter at her Manila office on Wednesday in a sharp increase of government pressure on her and her website Rappler.

The news site and Ressa, its chief executive, have been hit with tax evasion charges and now a libel case after clashing repeatedly with Mr Duterte over his crackdown on narcotics that has killed thousands.

"The message that the government is sending is very clear... 'Be silent or you're next'," an emotional Ressa told reporters outside a Manila court yesterday. She stumped up a bond of 100,000 pesos (\$2,600), the sixth time since December that she has paid bail on a government case.

"You have to express outrage and do it now. Press freedom is not just about journalists... Press freedom is the foundation of every single right of every Filipino to the truth," added Ressa, who was named a Time Magazine Person of the Year last year for her journalism. Global condemnation from dignitaries, press freedom and human rights groups has poured in since plainclothes agents appeared at Rappler to serve an arrest warrant.

"The arrest of Maria Ressa is an outrage," said Committee to Protect Journalists board chairman Kathleen Carroll. "She should be

freed immediately and the Philippine government needs to cease its multi-pronged attack on Rappler."

Former US secretary of state Madeleine Albright tweeted: "The arrest of journalist @mariaressa by the Philippine government is outrageous and must be condemned by all democratic nations."

The libel case against Ressa and former Rappler reporter Reynaldo Santos Jr stems from a 2012 report written about a businessman's alleged ties to a then judge on the nation's top court.

While investigators initially dismissed the businessman's 2017 complaint about the article, the case was subsequently forwarded to prosecutors for their consideration.

The legal foundation of the case

is a controversial law aiming to crack down on online offences ranging from harassment to child pornography. Ressa's team has argued that the legislation did not take effect until months after the story was published, but the government has countered that the story was updated in 2014.

"In essence, in the contemplation of the law, it is a new article because of the modification, republication," Mr Markk Perete, a spokesman for Department of Justice prosecutors, told Agence France-Presse.

Rappler conceded the story was updated, but noted that it was to fix a typo and no substantive changes were made.

Ressa's lawyer JJ Disini said he will formally ask the court within the week to dismiss the case as the publication and the modification were made more than a year ago.

The businessman who accused Rappler, Mr Wilfredo Keng, yesterday welcomed the charges as he said the website "destroyed my reputation and endangered my life".

Duterte spokesman Salvador Panelo rejected allegations that the arrest had political motivations.

"Maria Ressa's claim that this is an assault on freedom of expression or freedom of the press has no basis," Mr Panelo told Manila's DWFM radio in an interview, adding that it was not the President or his allies who brought the libel case.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

RIGHT TO THE TRUTH

The message that the government is sending is very clear... 'Be silent or you're next'... You have to express outrage and do it now. Press freedom is not just about journalists... Press freedom is the foundation of every single right of every Filipino to the truth.



PHILIPPINE JOURNALIST MARIA RESSA

Drop libel charges against Ressa, Asean lawmakers urge

Lawmakers from South-east Asian nations yesterday called for libel charges against Philippine journalist Maria Ressa to be dropped, saying they are politically motivated.

Ressa, the chief executive officer and executive editor of the news site Rappler, was arrested on Wednesday on a cyber libel charge that carries up to 12 years' imprisonment. She was freed on bail yesterday amid international censure and allegations that she is being targeted over Rappler's criticism of President Rodrigo Duterte.

"These flimsy charges are clearly politically motivated. Maria Ressa's arrest is the latest in a long line of attacks on independent media in the Philippines, which is reeling from sustained harassment under the administration of President Rodrigo Duterte," Asean Parliamentarians For Human Rights (APHR)

chairman Charles Santiago, a member of the Malaysian Parliament, said in a statement.

"It shows the extent to which the Philippine government is willing to go in its bid to silence critics within the media. All charges against Maria Ressa must be dropped immediately," he added.

In a letter addressed to Mr Duterte, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Wan-Ifra) and the World Editors Forum expressed concern over Ressa's prosecution.

The international media watchdogs also highlighted the "absurdity" of the arrest, stating that charging Ressa over an article that was published before the Cyber-crime Prevention Act came into force, risked making the Act itself "unconstitutional", as it would be an "ex post facto law".

Mr Vincent Peyregne, chief executive officer of Wan-Ifra, and Mr Dave Callaway, president of the World Editors Forum, called the incident an "outrageous escalation".

Meanwhile, the Asia News Network (ANN) said in a statement that it has taken note of Ressa's arrest with "concern and alarm".

"As Asia's leading alliance of 23 news media, we urge President Rodrigo Duterte and his government to be fair and impartial in the treatment of media organisations in his country. The people of the Philippines, and the media that serves them, deserve no less," ANN said.

Amnesty International described the libel case as "yet another absurd legal attack" that amounted to harassment.

The Jakarta-based APHR noted the "robust and commendable response from the wider Philippine press and journalist community, many of which came out quickly in solidarity with Ms Ressa".

Mr Santiago added: "Freedom of information is crucial in any functioning democracy..."

"Governments need to recognise the vital role independent media outlets play and take all necessary steps to ensure a safe environment for journalists to work without undue interference."

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New parties to challenge Suu Kyi's dominance

Rivals trying to shake her party's grip on power ahead of Myanmar's polls next year

YANGON • New political groups are emerging to contest Myanmar's next election in 2020, aiming to challenge the hegemony of national civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi after she has been weakened by escalating ethnic conflicts and slowing economic growth.

Those factors were cited by party officials for the poor performance of Ms Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) in by-elections last November, when it won only seven of the 13 seats up for grabs as regional and army-linked parties made gains.

"Now that ethnic parties have allied with one another and prepared, we can't fully rely on the power of the party. We must try harder than before to win the trust of the people," said NLD lawmaker Dashi La

Seng from the northern state of Kachin, where the party lost a seat in November's polls.

At stake is the future of Myanmar's transition to democracy. The NLD swept to power in a landslide victory in 2015, winning a comfortable majority in Parliament despite 25 per cent of the seats being reserved for the army.

While the NLD is still expected to do better than other parties next year, its majority could suffer severe losses, say analysts.

"It's questionable whether the NLD will win enough seats to form the government. If they don't, they'll have to form a coalition or negotiate with other parties," said analyst Ye Myo Hein at the Tagaung Institute of Political Studies.

The Nobel Peace laureate has



While Ms Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy is still expected to do better than other political parties at the polls next year, its majority could suffer severe losses, say analysts. Escalating ethnic conflicts and slowing economic growth have weakened her party's standing. PHOTO: REUTERS

faced criticism from ethnic leaders that her government is high-handed and lacks an understanding of the political demands of the country's myriad minorities, while investors have long complained about the slow pace of reform.

Ms Suu Kyi has responded to recent setbacks with a flurry of activity.

In the space of one week last month, Ms Suu Kyi – often seen as aloof in style – popped into a school in a Muslim neighbourhood of Yangon and launched an investment conference in the commercial capi-

tal touting the country's plentiful resources and youthful population, while her party floated changes to the military-drafted Constitution.

The burst of activity was interpreted as an attempt by Ms Suu Kyi to more actively push the government's message to constituents and investors. But her rivals have been busy, too.

Former junta No. 3 Shwe Mann, the influential former Lower House Speaker who has been Ms Suu Kyi's ally, last week announced the formation of a new political force, the Union Betterment Party.

Mr Ko Ko Gyi, one of the legendary leaders of the student protests in 1988 against junta rule, has also started a party called the People's Party. He has tempted other groups, including ethnic parties, to launch a joint bid for power.

Nowhere are the headaches for the NLD bigger than in the western state of Rakhine, where it is dealing with the fallout from an army offensive that in 2017 forced around 730,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee across the border to Bangladesh.

The Rakhine ethnic party, Arakan National Party, had a strong show-

ing in the 2015 polls, but it has been denied major roles in the local administration, fuelling resentment against the NLD government in the state.

Mr Oo Aung Than, who runs Thazin Community Development Institute, an organisation that works on equal rights and development in Rakhine, has complained that the NLD ignored the political will of the Rakhine people in 2015.

"We ethnic people can see how they value ethnic people," he said. "The landslide victory will not happen again in 2020." REUTERS

Thai court to consider fate of party that nominated princess

BANGKOK • Thailand's Constitutional Court announced yesterday that it will consider a ban on a political party that nominated a princess for prime minister, raising the prospect of a further setback for opposition chances in next month's general election.

The Thai Raksa Chart Party,

which is linked to ousted populist prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, sparked an uproar last week when it nominated as its candidate for prime minister, if it wins a March 24 election, Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya, the king's sister.

But just hours after the shock announcement, King Maha Vajira-

longkorn said his older sister's bid was "inappropriate" and unconstitutional.

The election commission disqualified Princess Ubolratana from the contest on Monday and petitioned the Constitutional Court to dissolve the Thai Raksa Chart Party, saying the nomination of a royal was "an-

tagonistic towards the constitutional monarchy".

The court said it would take up the case.

"The Constitutional Court unanimously accepts the petition for consideration," it said in a statement.

It gave the party seven days to submit a written response, and

scheduled an initial court session on Feb 27.

Dozens of pro-democracy activists gathered in front of the Constitutional Court yesterday to protest against the dissolution of the party, which they said would risk political conflict.

A top party official, Mr Chaturon

Chaisang, told a news conference before the court's announcement that the party would abide by any ruling. "If there is any opportunity or channels by which we can assist in confirming the good intentions and honest action of the party's executive committee, we are ready to help," Mr Chaturon said.

If found guilty of violating election law, the party would be dissolved and its executive committee members banned from political office. REUTERS

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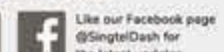
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PAS chief ‘gave blessings’ for denial over Umno payments

Opposition MP says he followed ‘mandate’ to deny admission made in earlier recording

PETALING JAYA • A top Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) leader has claimed the opposition outfit’s president Abdul Hadi Awang had given his “blessings” for him to deny that it was his voice on a recording alleging that it had received RM2 million (\$\$670,000)

from Umno. The clip is a key piece of evidence backing allegations that PAS received a total of RM90 million from Umno prior to last year’s general election. In a lengthy Facebook post on Wednesday, Bachok MP Nik Abduh Nik Aziz said he was torn between

admitting the truth that it was indeed his voice and denying the audio recording. He said: “I had two choices. One is to tell the truth and admit. Second, to deny it. It was a closed-door meeting to a targeted audience. Very closed. My right was to keep the secrecy and not to betray it. Both were syariah-compliant choices.” The audio recording Mr Nik Abduh referred to was leaked and it went viral early last year.

Mr Nik Abduh – the son of revered preacher Nik Aziz Nik Mat who died in 2015 – said he initially opted for the first option, but then realised the issue did not involve only him, but the party as well. “Even though the recording was leaked to mar my reputation, it was also aimed at causing the downfall of PAS,” he said. “Every PAS leader I referred (the matter) to asked me to deny it. I refused, but they insisted. Slander

must be shut off, they argued. GE14 was heating up and Pakatan Harapan was attacking PAS viciously,” he said in reference to last year’s general election. He said that in desperation, he approached Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi. “The president quickly gave me his blessings to deny it. I was happy to follow the mandate (from Abdul Hadi),” said Mr Nik Abduh. His post came in the wake of PAS admitting on Tuesday that it was indeed Mr Nik Abduh’s voice in the leaked audio recording. PAS secretary-general Takiyuddin Hassan has defended Mr Nik Abduh, saying that the MP himself admitted this, but the recording did not reflect the entire conversation. “He admitted it was his voice, but said it did not portray the actual context; it was not just about PAS receiving money from Umno, there were other things. In order to understand the context of the audio

recording, we have to listen from the first minute until the end, then only we will understand everything,” he said. Mr Nik Abduh also said he decided to tell the truth as the courts in London and the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) were probing the issue. The MACC started its probe into PAS after a report was made, following claims that Mr Abdul Hadi had received the funds from IMalaysia Development Berhad accounts. This came after the PAS president agreed to an out-of-court settlement over his defamation suit against Britain-based Sarawak Report editor Clare Rewcastle Brown. Mr Abdul Hadi had sued Ms Rewcastle Brown for libel over an article she published on Aug 6, 2016, alleging that the party had received RM90 million in bribes from then ruling party Umno. THE STAR/ASIA NEWS NETWORK

Anwar expects to succeed Mahathir in under two years

NEW YORK • Malaysia’s would-be prime minister said he expects to take over from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in less than two years but wants to give him enough time to govern effectively before assuming control. “Of course, it’s not five years because he’s made it very clear it would not exceed two years,” Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, leader of Parti Keadilan Rakyat, said in an interview with Bloomberg Television on Wednesday. “But it’s important to allow him to govern effectively because we are in very difficult and trying times.”

Tun Dr Mahathir had pledged during last year’s election campaign to stand aside for Mr Anwar once the latter was pardoned over a controversial sodomy conviction, which happened just a week after the opposition’s shock victory in May. The 93-year-old Dr Mahathir then pushed back the timeline to one to two years. Mr Anwar concurred, saying he planned to travel and spend time with his family after more than three years of imprisonment. The men have presented a united front to the public, giving Dr Mahathir a free hand to root out corrup-



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Of course it’s not five years because he’s made it very clear it would not exceed two years. But it’s important to allow him to govern effectively because we are in very difficult and trying times.

“ ”
DATUK SERI ANWAR IBRAHIM, leader of Parti Keadilan Rakyat, who wants to give Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad adequate time in office before succeeding him.

On the IMDB issue, Mr Anwar Ibrahim said Malaysia “will not compromise” in its talks with Goldman Sachs, and that the bank “must bear responsibility”. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

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tion and get to the bottom of a sprawling scandal over state fund IMalaysia Development Berhad (IMDB) before Mr Anwar steps in. That public stance belies decades of enmity between them: Dr Mahathir fired Mr Anwar as his deputy in 1998 over a dispute on how to respond to the Asian financial crisis. Mr Anwar was later jailed for committing sodomy and abusing power, which he denied, then subsequently imprisoned on another sodomy conviction. He has said the charges were politically motivated. Mr Anwar has shown signs of impatience, however. Despite saying he would spend a year away from politics, he returned to campaign for a Parliament seat just five months after his release. He was then allowed a seat in the top circle of the ruling Pakatan Harapan’s presidential council, while holding no Cabinet position. He also became chairman of a parliamentary caucus for reform and governance. On another matter, Mr Anwar said Malaysia “will not compromise” in its talks with Goldman Sachs Group on IMDB and that the

bank “must bear responsibility”. He said he is not sure whether Malaysia can get the US\$7.5 billion (\$\$10.2 billion) it is seeking from Goldman as compensation for the scandal, and that it is “not feasible” that top officials at Goldman Sachs were unaware of the situation as the deal was under way. Malaysia filed criminal charges against the bank last December. Units of the bank have been accused of making false statements in documents submitted to a local regulator in arranging US\$6.5 billion bond offers for IMDB. Goldman officials have said the bank raised money for IMDB without knowing the funds would be diverted, and that it is cooperating with the authorities. But Mr Anwar said “it’s not feasible or tenable to assume that the higher, top personalities in Goldman Sachs” were not aware. He said the country now has sufficient safeguards over the banking sector but cautioned against complacency. “However rigid the safeguards, if you have crooks running the system, they can always navigate,” he said. BLOOMBERG

Khazanah ‘set to scale back stakes in assets, inject cash into KL govt’

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysian sovereign wealth fund Khazanah Nasional will unveil a plan this month to deliver more cash to the government by pruning its stakes in non-strategic assets and dialling back its offshore presence, sources have told Reuters. This underlines the urgent need for Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad to raise money for government coffers, depleted by a fiscal deficit and a massive debt from a multibillion-dollar scandal at state fund IMalaysia Development Berhad. Under the new strategy, set to be announced at Khazanah’s annual review on Feb 28, the US\$39 billion (\$\$53 billion) fund will look to trim stakes in some companies identified as non-strategic to 15 per cent to 25 per cent – near the typical holding levels of pension funds, two of the sources told Reuters. Khazanah is also looking to reduce its physical presence in overseas locations such as London, Mumbai and Silicon Valley, two other sources said. It is considering offloading some of its foreign properties and tech investments too, they added. “They are not desperate to raise money, not in the way that erodes value. It would be very structured and gradual but it will be done, because the immediate objective is to

raise money,” according to one of the sources. Khazanah, traditionally more of a strategic investor, declined to comment. The sources, who declined to be identified, added that Khazanah’s aim is to manage its holdings as a portfolio investor rather than as an active direct investor. A senior Asia M&A banker at a US investment bank said: “For the first time, I’m seeing real gumption on the part of Khazanah... Malaysia is food for (mergers and acquisitions) bankers. The country needs money and a lot of Khazanah sell-downs will have to happen.” Sources said Khazanah’s assets could attract interest from Japanese players, other Asian investors and global funds. Khazanah’s 60:40 venture with Singapore’s Temasek, M+S, is in advanced talks with investors to sell office space, a hotel and retail components of the DUO property development, other sources added. The deal could fetch as much as \$2 billion and an announcement could come in the next few weeks, they said. Mr Prasenjit Basu, chief economist at CrossASEAN Research and a former co-head of research at Khazanah, said the changes indicate a complete re-setting of priorities. “From being a ‘private equity’-type investor, Khazanah will become a portfolio investor.” REUTERS

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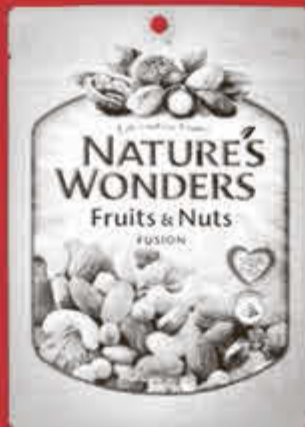
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Polish President Andrzej Duda (far right) and US Vice-President Mike Pence addressing the press in Warsaw on Wednesday. Fuelled by concerns that Huawei products could be used by China for espionage, the US has been convincing its allies to exclude tech giant Huawei from their telecoms projects. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



Pence praises Poland for action regarding Huawei

US steps up drive to get allies to exclude Chinese tech giant from telecoms projects

WARSAW • US Vice-President Mike Pence has praised Poland for its commitment to “protecting the telecoms sector from China”, as part of a concerted push by Washington to convince its allies to exclude tech giant Huawei from their telecommunications projects.

Fuelled by concerns that Huawei products could be used by China for espionage, Mr Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have stressed the dangers of collaborating with the Chinese firm during appearances in Poland and central European neighbours this week.

“We must continue to work so that all investment review mecha-

nisms protect critical security and economic infrastructure going forward,” Mr Pence said during a joint press conference in Warsaw with Polish President Andrzej Duda.

Huawei has repeatedly denied that its products could be used for espionage.

Last month, Poland arrested a Chinese employee of Huawei and a former Polish security official on spying allegations. Poland’s government is also considering excluding Huawei equipment from its future 5G network, sources told Reuters.

“The recent action your government has taken against a Huawei executive and a Polish national ac-

cused of cooperating with him demonstrate your government’s commitment to ensure our telecommunications sector is not compromised in a way that threatens our national security,” Mr Pence said.

Earlier in the week, Mr Pompeo cautioned allies against using Huawei equipment during a trip to the region, saying it would make it more difficult for Washington to “partner alongside them”.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hua Chunying hit back at Mr Pompeo’s remarks on Wednesday, saying the US was using its state power to suppress Chinese companies’ legitimate development rights and interests, according to a report by Chinese state news agency Xinhua.

Mr Pence’s comments come as Poland is seeking to convince the

United States to increase its military presence in the country. The number of US troops in Poland is capped at 4,500, but it fluctuates as formations rotate.

Poland, alarmed by Russia’s assertiveness on Nato’s eastern flank, has lobbied hard for the stationing of Nato troops on its soil, especially since Moscow’s annexation of Crimea in 2014. Mr Duda told US President Donald Trump in September on a trip to Washington that he would be willing to commit more than US\$2 billion (\$\$2.7 billion) to help facilitate the building of a permanent US base on Polish soil.

Austria’s Technology Ministry and Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel both said on Wednesday that an EU-wide agreement was needed on whether Huawei should be allowed to participate in

building 5G networks in the bloc. The European Commission is considering a de facto ban on Huawei’s 5G network equipment due to security concerns. But some European countries have been reluctant to follow American demands straightaway, and Huawei is determined to stay in the race for lucrative infrastructure projects.

Mr Andy Purdy, chief security officer at Huawei Technologies USA, said on Wednesday that the company is ready to face any extra security measures required, to compete to develop next-generation 5G networks in central and eastern Europe.

“The US government is very persistent, very determined and very forceful in communicating the messages about Huawei,” Mr Purdy said in an interview. He also said that Huawei is ready to work with the Polish government on additional steps to build trust.

Mr Georg Mayer, the company’s senior standards manager in Europe, said on Wednesday that the company has not as yet seen a slowdown in its business in Poland.

“We don’t see slowdown in sales on Huawei equipment here... but if the situation continues, at some point, it will impact our business as well,” Mr Mayer told a news conference in Warsaw. REUTERS

Chinese lose taste for French wine amid cooling economy

PARIS • Sales of French wine and spirits to China fell last year, industry figures showed, in a further sign that a Chinese economic slowdown is hitting consumption.

The Federation for Wine and Spirit Exporters (FEVS) said on Wednesday that direct sales to mainland China, France’s third-biggest export market, slumped 14.4 per cent in 2018 to €1 billion (\$\$1.5 billion).

But it said the drastic decline had been partly compensated by an increase in exports to Singapore and Hong Kong, from where some French wine is re-routed to the mainland.

Sales to all three Asian markets shrank by 1.5 per cent last year to €2.5 billion, a reversal after years of double-digit growth fuelled by the growing taste for foreign alcohol, particularly high-end reds from Bordeaux.

China’s economy grew at its slowest pace in almost three decades in 2018 and lost more steam in the last quarter of the year as the Beijing government battled to cut massive debt and quell a US trade war.

FEVS head Antoine Leccia, however, put a positive spin on the figures, saying exports to mainland China, Hong Kong and Singapore were still the second-best on record, “which confirms the long-term dynamics of the Chinese market”.

French wine makers have experienced only one other major blip in China over the past 15 years of explosive growth.

In 2013 and 2014, an anti-corruption drive by the Chinese Communist Party coincided with a fall in demand for luxury goods, with wine sales declining as a result.

“The only producer country which saw its exports (to China) increase last year was Chile because there are no import duties since 2016 thanks to a free-trade agreement,” Mr Leccia added.

Italian and Spanish producers were also hit by the downturn, he said.

Worldwide, French wine and spirits exports grew 2.4 per cent last year to €13.2 billion, driven by appetite for the country’s three most famous products: Champagne, Bordeaux wine and Cognac.

The largest export market remains the United States, where sales increased 4.6 per cent. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

CHILE’S GAIN

The only producer country which saw its exports (to China) increase last year was Chile because there are no import duties since 2016 thanks to a free-trade agreement



MR ANTOINE LECCIA, head of the French Federation for Wine and Spirit Exporters.

China Airlines pilot strike affects over 20,000 passengers

TAIPEI • A pilot strike since last Friday has forced Taiwan carrier China Airlines (CAL) to cancel more than 100 flights, affecting over 20,000 passengers.

The island’s main gateway, Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, said 24 flights were cancelled yesterday because of the strike, affecting 3,586 passengers, the Central News Agency (CNA) reported.

Among the flights cancelled were several operating the Taipei-Singapore route, as well as services to Singapore and Surabaya. Flights from Taiwan to Hong Kong as well as destinations in Europe and America were also affected, Xinhua news agency reported.

CAL reached an initial agreement with the Pilots Union Taoyuan, which organised the strike, to improve flight conditions after nearly 11 hours of negotiation on Wednesday. But the strike will continue until they reach a complete agreement, said the union’s standing director Chen Pei-pei.

The two sides agreed to continue negotiations this week.

The strike began after CAL had allegedly ignored the union’s request concerning fatigued pilots. Many of the airline’s pilots have complained about the hours on long-distance flights, with representatives demanding that more pilots to be deployed for health and flight safety, Xinhua said.

More than 600 pilots from the union have taken part in the strike, according to the union.

The union also requested transparent co-pilot training and promotion, no coercion of union members and replacement of the airline manager in charge of labour relations, Xinhua said.

According to The China Post, the union wants CAL to halve the ratio of foreign pilots from the current 10 per cent to 5 per cent within the next three years, stop recruiting new ones and bar foreign co-pilots from promotion training.

CAL employs more than 1,300 pi-



Representatives from 60 trade unions rallying in Taipei this week to support strikes by Taiwan’s China Airlines pilots. Some of the signs in Chinese say “We Want Flight Safety, Support Strike” and “Pilots Need Rest”. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

lots, of which 124 are foreign. The airline said not hiring foreign pilots and not allowing foreign co-pilots to join promotion training could constitute employment discrimination.

CNA said the pilot union and CAL have reached a consensus on the recruitment of foreign pilots, with the airline agreeing to plan within two

years to hire foreign nationals only as co-pilots, and to cease hiring foreign pilots except under special conditions.

Should a pilot shortage arise, the carrier has agreed to hire Taiwanese rather than foreign pilots if they were equally qualified. However, this would not apply to foreign na-

tionals residing in Taiwan.

The airline also agreed to prioritise Taiwanese nationals if they perform as well as foreign pilots in promotion training, and that the number of Taiwanese pilots should not be lower than that of foreigners during each round of promotions, according to CNA.

US withdrawal from Syria will be positive step: Putin

SOCHI (Russia) • Moscow, Ankara and Teheran see the planned US withdrawal from Syria as a positive step, Russian President Vladimir Putin said after a summit with his Turkish and Iranian counterparts yesterday.

Mr Putin, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Iran’s Hassan Rouhani agreed that the US pullout from north-eastern Syria “would be a positive step that would help stabilise the situation in this region,

where ultimately the legitimate government should re-establish control”, the Russian leader told a joint press conference.

Mr Rouhani suggested he did not believe the US was planning to withdraw from Syria, saying: “We have no optimism about what the Americans say... but if they do withdraw, it will be very good news.”

The leaders of the three countries – who have positioned themselves as the key foreign players in Syria’s

long-running war – were meeting for talks on how to work more closely together in resolving the conflict.

Mr Putin said the talks were “constructive and business-like” and that “close coordination” was crucial to ensuring long-term stability in Syria. He said the three agreed to “strengthen cooperation” in the so-called Astana framework – a process initiated by Russia, Iran and Turkey that has eclipsed paral-

el peace talks led by the UN.

They also agreed to work together to put together a constitutional committee to help resolve Syria’s political future, Mr Putin said, adding that another round of talks would take place in Astana, Kazakhstan, late next month and early April.

Earlier, Mr Putin told his Iranian and Turkish counterparts that he wanted them to devise a joint plan to wipe out what he called “a hot-

bed of terrorists” in Syria’s Idlib region, an idea Moscow has so far tried and failed to sell to Ankara.

“We should not put up with the presence of terrorist groups in Idlib,” Mr Putin told Mr Erdogan and Mr Rouhani at the start of the summit. “That’s why I propose we consider practical concrete steps that Russia, Turkey and Iran can take to completely destroy this hot-bed of terrorists.”

Mr Rouhani appeared to back Mr

Putin, saying militants in Idlib should not be let off the hook, but Mr Erdogan did not respond to Mr Putin’s suggestion in his opening remarks. All three countries have forces on the ground in Syria, where they have coordinated efforts despite sometimes differing priorities and interests.

But tensions between Moscow and Ankara over Syria have risen in recent months, fuelled in part by the planned withdrawal of American forces. That promises to free up territory controlled by US or US-backed forces, spurring a race to fill the vacuum if and when it opens up. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

ISIS militants mount desperate last stand in 1-sq-km 'caliphate'

Kurdish-led forces close in on Baghouz, say fighting is fierce

AL-OMAR OILFIELD (Syria) • Terrorists from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) using tunnels and suicide bombers were mounting a desperate defence yesterday of the last square kilometre of their self-proclaimed "caliphate" in eastern Syria.

This came as Kurdish-led forces closed in on the small town of Baghouz, where ISIS fighters and their relatives were hunkered down, and met hundreds of famished and dishevelled people turning themselves in.

"The fighting is fierce," said Mr Adnan Afrin, a spokesman for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the Kurdish-Arab outfit that has been spearheading the campaign against ISIS with backing from a US-led coalition.

"There is significant resistance," he said at Al-Omar oilfield, the main staging base for the SDF's offensive against the very last shred of the original ISIS "caliphate".

The few hundred fighters of various nationalities holding out in their last bastion by the Iraqi border have launched bruising counter-attacks in recent days, Mr Afrin said.

The Islamists are clinging to about one square kilometre in the town's built-up area, as well as to an adjacent camp, where a number of civilians are believed to be gathered.

Mr Afrin said it was impossible to provide accurate figures, but he estimated the total number of fighters – men and women – at 1,000. "There are many tunnels in Baghouz now. This is why the operation is dragging on. There are many suicide bombers attacking our positions, with explosives-laden cars and motorbikes."

He also said two such suicide attacks were carried out by women on Tuesday, but he would not provide any figures on casualties among SDF ranks.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people are continuing to trickle out of the last ISIS redoubt daily, trudging up a dirt road to a collection point where SDF fighters and volunteers provide first aid and carry out a first screening. Many of those who fled had had to sleep outside in the cold to reach that point, where a lucky few get tents while the rest were spread out on cheap blankets.

"This is the second night we sleep outside. There was so much bombing in Baghouz that it was safer for us to sleep in the open," said Fatima, an Iraqi woman from Baghdad who fled Baghouz with her four children, all under 15.

The US-led coalition is carrying out air strikes on the area, while its forces are also present on the ground, sifting through the displaced for wanted extremists.

Mr Afrin said SDF forces tuning their walkie-talkies on the militant's frequencies "can hear them speak in Arabic, but also in Turkish, French and English".

Once the adult men have been separated from their families, foreign and SDF officers thumb through pictures on smartphones to ask new arrivals about wanted ISIS leaders.

The terrorist group's elusive Iraqi-born supremo, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, is not believed to be among the last ISIS leaders holed up in Baghouz. Several known Islamist figures have emerged from the dregs of the "caliphate" in recent days, however, including German Martin Lemke and Frenchman Quentin Le Brun.

A rift appears to have grown between foreign members of ISIS – who have nowhere to hide – and local fighters, who are attempting to blend back into the population as the organisation goes underground again.

An official declaration of victory against ISIS is expected in the coming days, a move of mostly symbolic value that will go down as the death certificate of the "caliphate", even as the terror organisation remains a threat.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



An operation by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces to expel ISIS terrorists from the Baghouz area in the eastern Syrian province of Deir Ezzor is in full swing this week. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Revolt could damage EU talks, Tory MPs warned

Note of caution ahead of vote on motion backing May as she tries to renegotiate deal

LONDON • British Prime Minister Theresa May could face a defeat in Parliament early today over her plan to renegotiate the Brexit deal, undermining her pledge to the European Union that, with changes, she can get the deal approved.

The symbolic vote was seen by Mrs May's team as little more than a rubber stamp of her plan to secure

changes to the divorce deal with the EU, giving her more time to satisfy lawmakers' concerns over one part of it – the Irish backstop.

But hardline Brexiters in her ruling Conservative Party are angry over what they see as her acceptance of ruling out a no-deal departure, something Mrs May and her team deny, saying that by law

Britain will leave the EU on March 29 with or without an agreement.

A rebellion, even in a symbolic vote, would be a blow to Mrs May, who has insisted to EU leaders that if they offer her more concessions on the deal agreed in November, she can command a majority in Parliament and get the pact passed.

Trade Minister Liam Fox urged

lawmakers to back the Prime Minister, warning: "Our European partners will be watching."

Mr Steve Baker, a member of the pro-Brexit European Research Group (ERG) of Conservative lawmakers, said no lawmaker in the governing party could be associated with anything which seems to take a "no-deal Brexit" off the table.

"Compromising no deal would be the daftest negotiating strategy and not in the national interest," he said on Twitter.

One Conservative MP said the ERG was still discussing which strategy to pursue in Parliament – to vote against or abstain.

Mrs May is trying to secure changes to the backstop arrange-

ment to prevent a return of border controls between Northern Ireland and EU-member Ireland to ease concerns that Britain will be kept too closely in the EU's orbit indefinitely or that the British province will be split away.

A motion to be debated states that Parliament welcomes Mrs May's update on Tuesday regarding progress in seeking changes to the deal, and reaffirms its support for a vote on Jan 29 that she should seek to renegotiate the part of the deal relating to the future of the Ireland-Northern Ireland border.

In a bid to prevent a no deal, several lawmakers will try to get Parliament to back their alternative proposals, with options including a second referendum, a delay to Brexit and even a push to reverse the decision to leave the EU.

Speaker John Bercow will decide whether to select any of the amendments for a vote. Lawmakers will vote on each of the selected amendments one by one, before voting to give final approval to the wording of the motion itself.

If lawmakers support the motion and give Mrs May more time to negotiate, nothing will immediately change. If the motion is rejected, it would undermine her efforts.

It is not clear whether any amendment will win enough support to pass. Lawmakers trying to force the government to delay Brexit say they will wait until the next round of votes Mrs May has promised on Feb 27 to make their move.

On Wednesday, European Council president Donald Tusk said the bloc was waiting for Britain to present solid proposals to break the impasse. REUTERS



Netherlands Foreign Minister Stef Blok gesturing next to "the Brexit monster" in his office in The Hague. The Dutch government has unveiled its own vision of Brexit in the form of a big, blue and hairy monster. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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Usual \$31.80 **2 for \$18**
b. 200ml Newborn Pure Purifying Body Wash/Nourishing Shampoo
Usual \$37.80 **2 for \$28**
c. 200ml Newborn Pure Moisturising Lotion
Usual \$41 **2 for \$29.90**
d. Liquid Cleanser Refill 650ml x 6
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China cancels trade talks with UK over warship threat

LONDON • Chinese Vice-Premier Hu Chunhua has cancelled trade talks with Britain's Finance Minister Philip Hammond, after Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson threatened to deploy an aircraft carrier in Beijing's backyard. The Sun newspaper reported yesterday.

Mr Hu was due to hold trade talks with Mr Hammond this weekend. Instead, the newspaper said, Mr Hu cancelled the talks in protest against Mr Williamson's fiery speech.

Mr Williamson had said on Monday that Britain must be prepared to boost its "lethality", and threatened to send the warship to the Pacific in response to Beijing's military ambitions.

The speech appears to have been seen by both No. 10 Downing Street and the Treasury before Mr Williamson gave it, a defence source told The Sun.

Another source told the newspaper: "There is huge anger across the Cabinet. Gavin was partially inciting a war – the team knew China wouldn't be happy."

During the planned trade talks, China had been expected to lift bans on British poultry and cosmetics which have not been tested on animals, opening up access to markets worth an estimated £10.2 billion (\$17.8 billion) over five years.

However, China offered only junior officials for the trade talks, ending hopes that two memorandums of understanding would be signed.

British officials have embarked on a frantic round of diplomacy to try and get the talks back on track for this weekend, The Sun reported.

The deals would have been a much-needed boost for Prime Minister Theresa May's government, which is scrambling to drum up trade ties ahead of Britain's departure from the European Union.

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Spotted: Rare black leopard in Africa

Photos are first scientific confirmation in a century of the melanistic big cat on continent

NAIROBI • Whispers of sightings of the elusive black leopard have long swirled around central Kenya, and scientists have now confirmed its presence there with a series of rare images taken by camera traps.

The images were captured by researchers from the San Diego Zoo who have been studying leopards in the Loisaba wildlife conservancy, and an independent photographer working in the region.

"We are very excited to hear that these camera traps have captured rare footage of melanistic leopards, otherwise known as black panthers!" the conservancy said on its website.

Melanism is a genetic mutation like albinism, except it leads to a surplus in pigment that turns the fur or skin of an animal black.

The study, led by the zoo's Dr Nicholas Pilfold and published in the *African Journal of Ecology* in January, said the photos represent the first scientific confirmation in a century of the black leopard's presence in Africa.

The last confirmed report was a photo taken in Addis Ababa in 1909 that is stored in the Museum of National History in the United States.

In Kenya, a captive black leopard was photographed in 2013 while other images taken from a helicopter circulated in 2018. However, the latest photos represent the first recorded scientific evidence.

Dr Pilford said that after receiving numerous reports of sightings of the leopard, his team set up eight camera traps last February, and within three months had snapped a sub-adult female.

He estimates there are “definitely two, possibly three” in the region, adding that only 11 per cent of leopards across the globe are black.

"By far, these are the best, most intimate images we have of a black leopard in Africa."

Any big cat species with melanism is referred to as a black panther, such as black leopards in Asia and Africa and black jaguars in the Americas.

Dr Pilford's team worked in parallel with photographer Will Burrard-Lucas, who used his personally-designed Camtraptions (camera trap) to capture images of the same leopards in the region, and released

Maserati cars bought for Apec summit in PNG found

PORT MORESBY • Papua New Guinea (PNG) has recovered 40 Maserati cars that vanished after being controversially bought for a recent Apec summit in the impoverished nation, but other vehicles remain missing.

Government documents show that dozens of the sleek Maserati Quattroporte cars – worth at least US\$135,000 (S\$183,000) each – have resurfaced at a wharf in Port Moresby and will be sold off next week. Three Bentley Flying Spur V8 vehicles worth at least US\$410,000 each will also be sold by tender.

Police have been called in to find an unknown number of the estimated 1,500 vehicles that were bought or donated for last November's summit – which saw leaders from across the region descend on Port Moresby. The government justified the purchase of the sports cars by saying it was in keeping with the prestige of the event.

The disappearance of the vehicles after the summit became a major political headache for Prime Minister Peter O'Neill, who is battling to prevent a vote of no confidence in Parliament.

Apec 2018's CEO Christopher Hawkins has written to police to say that five vehicles in their possession have been recovered and four remain unaccounted for. An unknown number of vehicles are in use by government departments.

Critics had said the money used to buy the cars could have been better spent dealing with chronic social problems in a developing nation where diseases such as polio and tuberculosis have recently re-emerged. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

them alongside the study.

The irony of the scientific paper coming out not long after the 2018 box office success of Marvel's *Black Panther*, based on the fictional African nation of Wakanda – which is said to border Kenya – was not

lost on Kenya's Twittersphere.

Even actress Lupita Nyong'o – who hails from Kenya and starred in the movie – hailed the “unreal” sighting on Twitter.

And Dr Pilford said: "I find the coincidence to be kind of unique. I looked up where Wakanda is and (how) the Marvel comic universe is drawn, it is not that far away from our study area."

AGENCE-FRANCE PRESSE



Camera traps have captured rare footage of a melanistic leopard, otherwise known as black panther, in Kenya, say scientists from the San Diego Zoo.



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Top gender-balanced
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1. Like-for-like: based on a comparable scope of consolidation
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THE STRAITS TIMES

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Deal with EU a boost for S'pore trade

A t a time of resurgent populism and protectionism, the European Union-Singapore Free Trade Agreement (EUSFTA), which was approved by the European Parliament on Wednesday, sends a positive signal that support for free trade is still alive and well. The EUSFTA is a landmark deal in two key respects. First, it is a “new generation” trade agreement which not only eliminates tariffs on goods, but also improves market access for services and government procurement, provides for stronger protection of intellectual property rights as well as mutual recognition of product standards, and protects investors.

It also recognises the integrated nature of supply chains in South-east Asia, allowing compo-

nents sourced from Asean by Singapore companies to be deemed as Singapore-originating – and therefore eligible for tariff-free treatment – in the case of certain products.

The EUSFTA will benefit multiple parties when it comes into force after being ratified. About 84 per cent of Singapore exports will be able to enter the EU duty-free. Singapore service providers will also enjoy easier access to the EU market. Singapore companies will be able to bid for EU government contracts, including at the level of local governments. Companies in Asean which provide inputs to Singapore producers exporting to the EU stand to gain as well, as do EU multinationals that participate in Asean-centred supply chains. EU

companies – of which there are already more than 10,000 in Singapore – will also be more easily able to use Singapore as a gateway to regional markets, which could lead to more investments from the EU into Singapore and the region. Singapore companies will also be able to invest more easily in the EU, where they will enjoy not only easy market access but also investor protection.

The EUSFTA, the first agreement between the EU and any Asean country, has kindled hopes that it could pave the way for other bilateral trade deals between the EU and countries in the region. But such hopes should be tempered by the fact that most Asean economies are less open, more populous and at earlier stages of development

than Singapore, which took about a decade to negotiate the EUSFTA. Thus Singapore's first-mover advantage could last for an extended period, which will enable it to cement its position as a key hub in Asean's supply chain network.

The EUSFTA has been welcomed by companies, both in Singapore and in the EU, especially in areas like electronics, chemicals and telecommunication equipment where two-way trade is already well established. But the agreement also holds out significant potential benefits in other areas, particularly services. Thus, companies – and especially small and medium-sized enterprises – will need to identify untapped opportunities in what is the world's biggest market.

Ready to tackle physical and cyber threats

Israel's cyber defence strategy ropes in the economy, the young and the citizenry, and includes a cyber emergency hotline 119



Irene Tham

Senior Tech Correspondent

Israel lives up to its reputation for its imperious border controls. I encountered it first-hand last month in Bangkok, where I was in transit to Tel Aviv.

Any romantic notion of the land of the Bible I had faded away after more than one hour of questioning and luggage inspection. A letter I was carrying from the Israeli embassy in Singapore explaining the purpose of my visit – to attend a cyber security conference – did not help.

Judging by the questions asked, I realised it was a stamp from the Malaysian Customs in my passport that was attracting the unwanted attention. The timing was unfortunate: A week before, Israel had accused Malaysia of “rabid anti-Semitism” after the latter said it would not host any more sports events involving athletes from the Jewish state.

I was ushered to a spartan room several floors below the departing gate where my luggage was ransacked. A handful of Filipinos were also in the same room as their hand luggage each contained about five mobile devices.

The rigorous checks are a reminder of the hostilities Israel faces daily, and the stern measures it is known to have taken in response.

At the sixth annual CyberTech conference in Tel Aviv late last month, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was quick to point out to the thousands of attendees that it foils missile and other physical attacks by Iran daily. Israel's physical readiness also

extends to the cyberspace, where it guards with utmost seriousness. This is evident when the person in charge of all cyber security matters is none other than Mr Netanyahu himself.

“Any country can be attacked today with cyber attacks and every country needs the combination of a national cyber defence effort and a robust cyber security industry. And I think Israel has that, and... in ways that are... unmatched,” he said.

Singapore has also been the target of politically motivated attacks. The most recent one was in June last year involving the breach of the personal data of 1.5 million patients of the SingHealth group of public hospitals and clinics – Singapore's worst breach.

While Singapore started a cyber security vocation in the military to allow tech prodigies to receive training in hacking techniques to foil cyber attacks only in 2017, Israel has had such training for decades.

Israel's elite cyber intelligence team, also known as Unit 8200, is the latest iteration of the nation's effort that dates back to the 1930s – driven by a desire to survive in a hostile environment.

MILITARY FOUNDATION

Today, Israel is the envy of many nations, exporting cyber security products to the tune of US\$6.5 billion (S\$8.8 billion) yearly, second only to the United States as the world's top supplier. Such exports were worth just US\$1.6 billion in 2012.

Cyber security prowess is coveted today with data, the new oil of the 21st century, needing protection of the highest grade.

Israel owes its success first to its military, where people with “rosh gadol” are trained to deal with life-and-death scenarios, including hacking the systems of enemies.

The Hebrew term means “big head”, and describes people who demonstrate leadership potential, think out of the box and are willing to go beyond the call of duty.



Potential candidates are assessed to determine their character, aptitude and psychology for months in high school before they are enlisted in Unit 8200.

It also helps that national service is compulsory for Israeli men and women who turn 18 years old, gathering the talent pool in one place – despite being a small country with just 8.6 million people.

ECONOMIC VALUE

It is not enough just to train bright people in cyber warfare. The skills have to translate into dollars and cents to provide economic value.

Israel is probably the first in the world to have successfully fused its military cyber smarts with the investment community.

This is the “unmatched” combination Mr Netanyahu spoke about where graduates of its Unit 8200 become the avant-garde of its start-up industry.

One forerunner is cyber security software firm Check Point Software Technologies, whose three co-founders were in Unit 8200 before starting the company in 1993.

Today, Israel has one of the world's highest concentrations of start-ups, with 6,500 of them specialising in many areas including cyber security, mobile apps and machine learning.

Another point of pride: Its start-up sector attracts 20 per cent of the global private investments today – compared with just 10 per cent in 2014.

SUSTAINABLE ECOSYSTEM

To facilitate continuous innovation, Mr Netanyahu is building a cyber security and technology park in Be'er Sheva – a city in the Negev desert in the south.

EMC, Deutsche Telekom, PayPal, Oracle and IBM have already set up shop there, employing a total of 3,000 people, mostly research personnel. Opened in 2014, the park is also home to 20,000 combat medics and other soldiers in training. When the Israel Defence Forces intelligence building is completed by 2022, another 10,000 soldiers will move into Be'er Sheva.

The park also houses the Computer Emergency Response Team (Cert) for addressing civilian cyber security incidents and a cyber security start-up arena known as CyberSpark.

The Ben-Gurion University, Israel's top school for cyber security, is nearby. It has a cohort of 20,000 students at any time, of whom half are studying subjects in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics discipline.

Graduates from the military and the university form a steady supply of potential workforce. They work with local and foreign business partners on start-up ideas.

The Israel Innovation Authority – formed in 2016 to turn Israel into an entrepreneur-friendly country – provides generous funding of up to US\$750,000 per start-up, to be paid back only if the company is

successful. The goal: Create up to 30,000 jobs in Be'er Sheva over the next 10 years.

The park is a re-creation of what Mr Netanyahu saw at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and Silicon Valley in San Francisco. It is a key part of Israel's National Cyber Initiative, rolled out in 2010 to answer the question: “What must you do to build the right ecosystem that will know what to do to deal with future cyber threats?”

The initiative's rollout was the first time Israel formalised its ambitions to be a global powerhouse for cyber security inventions.

“I decided several years ago to turn Israel into one of the five cyber powers of the world and that required allowing this combination of military intelligence, academia and industry to converge in one place,” said Mr Netanyahu last month at CyberTech.

FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Israel's cyber defence also embraces a social element, recognising the importance of civilians as the country's first line of defence.

Last month, it launched a 119 cyber security hotline, said to be the world's first, for the public to report suspicious cyber activities. Estonia is considering such a hotline.

The three-digit number replaces the existing 9344 number that had been in operation for about a year

but did not catch on among its citizens.

The number change is also for consistency as emergency numbers in Israel have only three digits: 100 for police, 101 for ambulance, and 102 for fire and rescue services.

Said Mr Yigal Unna, director-general of the Israel National Cyber Directorate, of the 119 hotline: “We are like a communicable disease centre for identifying Patient Zero and containing an outbreak.”

Mr Unna said its Cert, which manages the cyber security hotline, takes every call seriously to identify a pattern of cyber activities that could mean something more sinister. “We had funny calls from people saying the air-con was attacking them,” he said, noting that even such calls are not taken lightly.

When The Straits Times visited Israel's Cert last month, the 119 operational room – which accommodated some 20 computer screens behind an iron-bolted iron door – was run mainly by women, testament to the way the country casts its net wide for talent.

Based on about 500 monthly calls to the previous 9344 number, Israel had discovered, on average, five distributed denial of service (DDoS) attacks and 40 phishing incidents a month.

DDoS attacks work by having thousands of malware-infected computers accessing and overwhelming a targeted site, causing a huge spike in traffic in the hope of taking the site down. Phishing is an attempt by cyber criminals to trick people into revealing more confidential information such as passwords.

Singapore's worst data breach last June is a good wake-up call for people here. Because there are no boundaries in cyberspace, anyone could become patient zero in a cyber pandemic.

In Israel, the belief is that there is no such thing as being over-prepared. Small countries aiming to grow their economies in the digital age must put in extra effort to protect their digital assets.

Similarly, Singapore should pull out all the stops to protect its cyberspace.

Rolling out a three-digit emergency hotline for cyber incidents would not be too far-fetched to contemplate in the face of this possibility: Hackers hijacking connected vacuum cleaners, smart light bulbs, smart TVs and surveillance cameras in millions of homes to launch a DDoS attack.

When a country equates cyber incidents to emergencies like a fire or crime, the psyche of its citizens will naturally shift and their awareness will be acutely heightened.

Singapore's current cyber incident hotline is a mouthful: (65)6323-5052 and singcert@csa.gov.sg.

As people are at the centre of all processes and systems, every last person and his response, or lack thereof, counts. This belief is embodied in the SGSecure mobile app, launched in September 2016 to allow citizens to report suspicious incidents or objects left unattended in public places. It's time Singapore extended its physical readiness to the cyberspace.

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Let's get poetic about the wonders of an engineering education

Lim Sun Sun and Roland Bouffanais

For The Straits Times

In a paradox rich with Dickensian undertones, one could say it is perhaps the best of times and the worst of times to be an engineer. After all, many signs turn to the significant promise of being an engineer in an era when technology pervades every realm of our human existence. Engineers and the innovations they forge serve to lubricate, accelerate and automate many everyday processes, thereby enhancing our quality of life and boosting individual and societal well-being.

Every successive iteration of the industrial revolution has ushered in some laudable transformations, mechanising processes that are arduous, toxic or tedious. Just think about the seismic advancements in waste management, factory production and data computation that have liberated humans from these painstaking tasks. These are monumental achievements that engineers can and should claim full credit for.

By the same token however, precisely because of the gargantuan impact technology has on our everyday lives, engineers are increasingly excoriated for many of the ills of innovation.

Consider the blame that has been laid on technologists for an ever expanding litany of societal problems such as environmental degradation, climate change, internet addiction, online disinformation, privacy incursions and even social polarisation.

With the swelling influence of Big Tech and the looming pall of Big Data, concerns about the grave responsibilities that engineers can and should bear are far from evaporating.

This unduly tarnished image that engineering has recently acquired is both unfortunate and aberrant, considering the discipline's lofty origins. Basic yet fundamental inventions such as the pulley, lever and wheel have revolutionised agriculture and transportation. Engineers have built on these foundations to tame electromagnetism, thereby enabling a rapid electrification of our planet by integrating and interconnecting power grids. These advancements have in turn triggered an avalanche of wireless data transmissions that drive our information society today.

As a city state devoid of natural resources, Singapore's economic success has also been closely intertwined with engineering and is largely attributed to our technical prowess. Widely seen as a technocracy, the country's leaders have been known to appoint engineers to the highest echelons of the government and public service, including luminaries such as Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean,



former Cabinet ministers Lim Hng Kiang and Yaacob Ibrahim and former head of civil service Peter Ho. Over the years however, the profession has gradually lost its shine among university hopefuls, with top students favouring seemingly more versatile disciplines such as law and business.

This trend of declining enrolment is regrettable as engineering is perhaps more industry focused, societally relevant and future-ready than ever before.

It steeps students in the competencies of analytical and systems thinking, and equips them with the critical skill of simplifying seemingly convoluted and impenetrable devices, structures or processes undergirding our world. Although the classical engineering approach of reductionism is often criticised as over-simplification, its very parsimony has enabled engineers to design increasingly complex and sophisticated products and systems.

The staggeringly intricate design of a new commercial airliner is a perfect case in point, being the fruit of the collective genius of aeronautical, electrical, material, mechanical, software and systems

engineers working in concert.

The Internet, cities, social networks, and even the ubiquitous smartphone, are further examples of engineered complex systems which cannot simply be viewed as the sum of their constituent parts.

Neither can such multi-faceted systems be built with insights from narrow disciplinary lenses as they necessitate expertise that transcends traditional knowledge boundaries. Indeed, engineers have been relentless in collaborating across disciplines to forge new ways of understanding and creating complex systems, marshalling artificial intelligence to support and augment their irrepresible urge to innovate.

As a discipline therefore, engineering offers the next-generation innovator an impressive complement of theoretical, analytical, technological, and practical competencies. Furthermore, when farsighted engineering curricula break down disciplinary silos, and expose students to the humanities and social sciences, engineers can be even more conscious and conscientious in appreciating the deep impact of the technological

infrastructures they build. Vested with this formidable repertoire of skills, engineers can be pivotal players in many organisations across all levels, including at the executive, managerial and strategic planning levels.

Engineering is thus a remarkably valuable discipline for its time and its utility will only rise as Industry 4.0 becomes a reality. Each new chapter of the industrial revolution yields more profound changes to humanity at a confoundingly rapid pace, with far-reaching implications for virtually all human beings. With a technology-driven future on our horizon, there is no finer moment than the present for students to harness the strengths of engineering.

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A Boeing worker at a production factory in South Carolina. The intricate design of an airliner is the fruit of the collective genius of aeronautical, electrical, material, mechanical, software and systems engineers working in concert. Engineering is perhaps more industry focused, societally relevant and future-ready than ever before, and steeps students in analytical and systems thinking. PHOTO: REUTERS

How elitism is embraced by the US left

David Brooks

Over the past generation, global capitalism has produced the greatest reduction in human poverty in history. Over the past 10 years, American capitalism has produced 20 million new jobs. The productive dynamism of capitalism is truly a wonder to behold.

But economic growth alone is not enough. Growth alone does not translate into economic security for the middle class and the less skilled. Growth alone does nothing to reverse the social decay afflicting communities across America. This reality is transforming the political debate – and shifting everything leftwards.

Among conservatives, there are now a bevy of thinkers who are trying to find ways to use government to reduce inequality, promote work and restore community. For example, in the lead essay of the conservative journal National Affairs, Ms Abby M. McCloskey notes that the family you are born into and the neighbourhood you live in have a much stronger influence on your socioeconomic outcome than any other factors.

Her essay is an outstanding compendium of proposals designed to strengthen family and neighbourhood. Pell grants could be used to pay for vocational and apprenticeship training and not just for college. The federal government could support a voluntary national service programme by paying people, once in their lifetime, to work for a year at a local non-profit. The tax code could be tweaked so that people with no income tax liability could receive a cash credit for making charitable donations.

These proposals are activist but humble. It's not the federal government centrally deciding how to remake your community. It's giving communities and people the resources to take responsibility and assume power for themselves.

As many conservatives have shifted leftwards, so have progressives. From former president Bill Clinton to Barack Obama, Democrats respected market forces but tried to use tax credits and regulations to steer them in more humane ways. Obamacare was an effort to expand and reform private health insurance markets. That Democratic Party is ending.

Today, Democrats are much more likely to want government to take direct control. This is the true importance of the Green New Deal, which is becoming the litmus test of progressive seriousness.

I don't know if it is socialism or not socialism – that's a semantic game – but it would definitely represent the greatest centralisation of power in the hands of the Washington elite in our history.

The resolution is unabashed about this, celebrating and calling for more “federal government-led mobilisations”. Under the Green New Deal, the government would provide a job to any person who wanted one. The government would oversee the renovation of every building in America. The government would put sector after sector under partial or complete federal control: the energy sector, the transportation system, the farm economy, capital markets, the healthcare system.

The authors liken their plan to the New Deal, but the real parallel is to World War II. It is the state mobilising as many of society's resources as possible to wage a war on global warming and other ills.

The document is notably coy about how all this would be implemented. Exactly which agency would inspect and oversee the renovation of every building in America? Exactly which agency would hire every worker?

But the underlying faith of the Green New Deal is a faith in the guiding wisdom of the political elite. The authors of the Green New Deal assume that technocratic planners can master the movements of 328 million Americans and design a transportation system so that “air travel stops becoming necessary”.

They assume that congressional leaders have the ability to direct what in effect would be gigantic energy firms and gigantic investment houses without giving sweetheart deals to vested interests, without getting corrupted by this newfound power, without letting the whole thing get swallowed up by incompetence. (This is a Congress that can't pass a budget.)

If this were ever put into practice, there would have to be several new Pentagons built to house the hundreds of thousands of new social planners. The authors of this fantasy are right that we need to do something about global warming and inequality. But simple attempts to realign incentives, like the carbon tax, would be more effective and more realistic than government efforts to reorganise vast industries.

In an alienated America, efforts to decentralise power are more effective and realistic than efforts to concentrate it in the Washington elite. The great paradox of progressive populism is that it leads to elitism in its purist form.

The impulse to create a highly centralised superstate recurs throughout US history. There were people writing such grand master plans in the 1880s, the 1910s, the 1930s. They never worked out. As the thinker Richard Weaver once put it, the problem with the next generation is that it hasn't read the minutes of the last meeting. NYTIMES

In an alienated America, efforts to decentralise power are more effective and realistic than efforts to concentrate it in the Washington elite. The great paradox of progressive populism is that it leads to elitism in its purist form.

Rethinking what teachers do

David Von Drehle

Of all the ideas we have forgotten from maths class, the most important to relearn – because it illuminates our most urgent challenges – is the difference between arithmetic and geometric progressions.

Maybe you recall. An arithmetic progression is a sequence in which the difference between numbers remains constant. For example, counting by twos: 1, 3, 5, 7 and so on. Each number adds two more.

A geometric progression is a sequence defined by a constant ratio. Doubling, for instance. Instead of adding two, you multiply by two: 1, 2, 4, 8 and so on. Each number is twice the one before.

Technology advances in the geometric sequence – since the dawn of computing, anyway. Intel

co-founder Gordon Moore's famous law predicted that processors would double in power every two years. Technologists believe we may be reaching the end of that sequence, but so far, Moore's Law has taken us from room-sized computers back when I was in grade school to the inconceivably more powerful computer I slip into a shirt pocket today.

But the functionality of most adult human beings grows arithmetically, if it grows at all.

We won't wake up tomorrow twice as capable as we are today, and twice again the day after that. We add knowledge bit by bit and gain experience by slow increments.

For decades, this has been a manageable difference. Humans began with a huge head start over computers. And if you look back to the examples above, you will notice that the sequences are similar in the early stages. At step four, for example, the arithmetic sequence has reached 7 while the geometric sequence has reached 8. With time, though, the gap explodes.

Thirty steps into the sequence, adding two gets you to 59. Doubling gets you to nearly 537 million.

With that in mind, let's look at the striking teachers of the Denver public schools. At first blush, the picketing educators are seeking a simpler pay formula, which would end a years-long experiment in paying bonuses to steer teachers

towards targeted results. At a deeper level, though, the strike illustrates the incremental rate of human progress compared with the geometrical tsunami of technological change.

In 2006, Denver's then-new bonus system was state-of-the-art, an innovation embraced by teachers, administrators and taxpayers alike. Now, it has become an anachronism. It matters little whether this experiment was noble or cracked. What matters is how long it took. During the same 13 years, technology created the smartphone, the tablet and the Cloud, which, in turn, enabled countless educational apps, games and other resources that – for the first time in history – make truly individualised learning a universal possibility.

So while Denver was fiddling with formulas, what's needed is a blank-slate rethinking of what teachers do, how classrooms work and what schools are for.

Students from inner cities to rural hamlets can now (or soon) experience the world's most skilled instructors delivering optimal lessons – at the student's pace, in the student's language, at whatever time of day the student learns best. To leverage and augment such incredible resources, on-site teachers must become life coaches, role models, facilitators, therapists, motivators, demolishers of

obstacles and openers of eyes.

These are not qualities easily measured by student test scores or accumulated grad school credits. Yet they point to something essential about the future relationship of humans and our technologies.

We cannot outdo the computers in terms of standardised outputs or efficiency. We can only keep pace by emphasising those things that make us human to begin with: our capacity for connection, compassion, empathy and love.

As a kid, I was lucky enough to know a gap-toothed band director named Byron Gillette, who passed away in Colorado last month. I thought he was teaching me to play a trumpet when actually he was teaching me to live a life. My sister and I recently recalled life under his baton. “I remember Mr Gillette having me play clarinet solos at church,” Lynn texted. “As a super-shy, super-awkward teen, it was really helpful.” She's now a life-shaping educator herself.

How do we harness technology to help more teachers awaken more students to their possibilities and resources? How do we structure schools to create mastery of both the power and the perils of future tech?

These are just two questions in the long arithmetic sequence of human learning – but the answers, once we find them, could work wonders. WASHINGTON POST

Why a forward-looking Budget is needed

S'pore's pre-emptive strategies have served it well in mitigating crises in the past. Will it have the resources for the looming challenges ahead?

Tan Khée Giap and Tan Yan Yi

At an international conference in Budapest organised by the Central Bank of Hungary last week, there was an intense debate among participants on the effective role of central banks.

Singapore was repeatedly identified as an exemplary model where the central bank and the government have consistently done well in crisis management.

The discussion of the Singapore model among central bankers was dominated by how Singapore effectively managed crises, leading to a swift rebound from every economic recession or slowdown. However, I thought the debate largely missed the point – the severity of the crisis in the first place was mitigated, due largely to strong and stable macroeconomic fundamentals and efficient resource allocation for firms and individuals within the micro-economic environment.

PREVENTION RATHER THAN CURE

Singapore's fundamental strategy in effective crisis management is rooted in preventive and pre-emptive moves, rather than cures. The recent prudent regulations on property purchases, sales and bank-related borrowings, coupled with pre-emptive market cooling measures, are just a case in point.

As a small and open economy, Singapore's macroeconomic condition is constantly and strongly influenced by external factors. These include business cycles, financial turmoil and tumultuous political changes coming from Asian neighbours, or economic volatility transmitted from Western economies in an inter-connected and inter-dependent world.

Despite these volatile factors, Singapore has remained competitive, staying ahead of the curve in global trade and investments. It is able to do so by seizing opportunities and making itself relevant in the face of changes.

Singapore's longer-term survival rests upon its continuing to actively pursue globalisation under the World Trade Organisation.

FREE TRADE AND GLOBAL OPPORTUNITIES

When Singapore was the rotating chairman of Asean last year, regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) such as the Regional



Office workers in the financial district. Singapore's fundamental strategy in effective crisis management is rooted in preventive and pre-emptive moves, rather than cures. And it has remained competitive in global trade by seizing opportunities and making itself relevant in the face of changes. PHOTO: REUTERS

Comprehensive Economic Partnership were given a further push for the last mile of completion. Singapore's consistent support for the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) is clearly stated; in fact, it first founded TPP together with three other member countries.

It would not be surprising if early exploration and preparation for a bilateral FTA between Singapore and the United Kingdom is already being contemplated by senior civil servants before Brexit comes into effect. Singapore's unrelenting leadership in FTA for greater economic connectivity and regional integration is widely recognised.

In 2017, Singapore for the first time rose to become the third most competitive financial centre in the world, after London and New York, overtaking Hong Kong from fourth position, according to a London-based think-tank.

Thus, establishing Singapore as an infrastructure evaluation, arbitration, investment and financing hub in Asia and promoting internationalisation of the yuan are simply part of new opportunities that have surfaced under the Belt and Road Initiative which it must quickly seize upon.

Urbanisation is the next phase of development for China and India, and the growth of their middle class is powering their domestic consumption.

Singapore's businesses and government-linked companies must gain deeper footholds in their urbanisation drive by setting new standards. As a city-state, we have

1.79%

What Singapore's productivity growth would have to be at per annum, for the economy to grow at 2.79 per cent, according to an econometric model simulation by the Asia Competitiveness Institute at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

the advantage of providing comprehensive smart urban solutions.

And for the expanding middle class, which possesses strong purchasing power, Singapore as a cosmopolitan city offers an attractive modern lifestyle. This is highlighted by several international studies that have ranked Singapore very highly in terms of e-commerce, digitalisation and city liveability.

FIRM HOME FOUNDATIONS: THREE COMPONENTS

To seize opportunities arising from new development trends globally, there must first be a conducive business environment and a competitive corporate tax structure at home; these are vital for small and medium-sized enterprises to build strong foundations and prepare to venture abroad.

Good fiscal discipline with forward-looking budgetary planning, and ensuring general price and exchange rate stability at home are important too as "safety

buffers", enabling companies to better cope with the next economic downturn or financial crisis. They are preventive measures critical for healthy and robust business expansion. Second, efficient allocation of government resources for provision of public goods and services, transparency of regulations, good governance and firm rule of law at the micro-economic level are the sine qua non of incentivising businesses and individuals to realise or maximise their potential economic contributions.

Together, these provide the strong foundations that are necessary for the economy if our longer-term average growth in gross domestic product (GDP) is to stay at the higher band of 3 to 5 per cent per annum, which would also mean more job choices for citizens.

Third, whether it is soft capacity building by investing in people or building hard physical infrastructure, both are critical in maintaining Singapore's international competitiveness. Markets often fail when it comes to capacity building and skill upgrading. Government must thus act as a market enabler.

In an era of rapid technological and digital advancement, transformation of companies can be difficult in terms of management, marketing and manpower adjustments.

Multi-stakeholder-driven Industry Transformation Maps involving major industry players, unionists, business professionals, academics and the Government would be more appropriate, rather

than leaving it to the more painful creative destruction by market forces for adjustments.

GROWTH AND REVENUE OUTLOOK

From 2011 to last year, Singapore's annual GDP grew at an average of 3.7 per cent. Over the same period, the average annual productivity growth was 1.26 per cent.

Looking ahead, the econometric model simulation by the Asia Competitiveness Institute at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, relying on several assumptions, including labour-capital quality growth and one per cent employment growth, projects that for the economy to grow at 2.79 per cent, Singapore's productivity growth would have to be at 1.79 per cent per annum.

The productivity growth last year was around 2.6 per cent and is expected to improve gradually.

When preparing a national budget, the finance minister would usually examine the forecast GDP growth, look at the estimated government revenues versus government expenditures and, in the case of Singapore over the last two decades, factor in the amount of Net Investment Income (NII) that can fortunately be drawn upon to help in the event of budgetary shortfalls.

Contributions of NII to the Budget have gone up over the years, from an average \$2.72 billion per year over the 2000-2008 period to nearly tripling to \$8.13 billion per year between 2009 and 2015, and almost doubling to \$14.94 billion per year from 2016 to 2018.

The NII contributions have risen

over time, especially since 2009, in large part to rein in and mitigate the effects of rising income disparity. Special Transfers were made to provide extra funding for essential public services, including healthcare, transportation, housing and education.

As our population ages rapidly, more financial resources will be needed for healthcare and benefit-linked packages such as the Pioneer Generation and the forthcoming Merdeka Generation.

Given the challenges posed by the digital economy and the high value-added, skill-driven economy, pressure for greater public funding for various productivity improvement and skills training programmes is also expected to rise. Public investment in quality education from infancy, life-long learning and targeted skills-driven growth are critical as part of overall efforts to reduce income disparity and ensure a more inclusive society in the long term.

Money also needs to be set aside for growing infrastructure demands. For instance, airport and sea port expansion will be needed if Singapore is to remain a major logistics hub in Asia.

In the uncertain years ahead, what if Temasek Holdings and GIC fail to deliver expected profits, of which 50 per cent must be locked in the national coffers, to provide the funding for these expected additional demands on the Budget?

TRADE PROTECTIONISM

Trade protectionism and nationalist muscle-flexing are on the rise worldwide, including in our neighbourhood. The threat of terrorism remains while technology-driven disruption has sown job and economic uncertainty. These developments and trends are unlikely to go away in the medium term.

Singapore has done well thus far with its pre-emptive strategy in economic management. Faced with these rising challenges, a forward-looking Budget ought to strengthen our foundations for delivering macroeconomic stability as well as set aside ample financial resources that will, with policy-restructuring measures, continue to provide micro-economic efficiency and soft- and hard-capacity building.

However, the public at large and the business community would need clear assurances from the Government and the finance minister, in particular, on whether Singapore will have, in time to come, sufficient financial resources to respond nimbly and appropriately to the potential disruptions and challenges on the horizon.

• Tan Khée Giap is co-director, Asia Competitiveness Institute at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore; and Tan Yan Yi is a Singapore full-time national serviceman. This commentary is adapted from an article published in Business Times on Feb 13.

Macron, Modi and the management of popular unrest

Cybele Greenberg and Jonathan Jeffrey

For The Straits Times

As Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi prepares for pivotal national elections in May, international investors and economists are questioning the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) commitment to economic reform.

To many, the government's continued proliferation of protectionist policies and populist spending initiatives in India, including Finance Minister Piyush Goyal's interim budget unveiled on Feb 1, is undercutting the country's investment climate and dangerously diverging from the administration's original focus on market liberalisation.

From installing protectionist e-commerce and data localisation requirements to presenting an

interim budget rife with expensive handouts targeted at quelling rural dissent, Mr Modi's government has the international community worried about an ever-growing deficit.

Investors' concerns are not unmerited. The Indian budget will provide US\$85 (\$115) annually to up to 120 million rural households, a tax break for the middle class, a US\$40 monthly pension to almost 100 million workers, and an allocation of US\$225.5 billion to build rural infrastructure.

The growing fiscal deficit – a by-product of these expensive measures – remains a concern, with the International Monetary Fund warning earlier this month that New Delhi must embrace "greater efforts" in order to "ensure that the (country's) debt target is met by 2025". Meeting the goal will be increasingly complex with Indian growth in the second half of the current fiscal year slowing down from the first half.

However, the BJP's continued embrace of populism – through both protectionist policies and rural spending initiatives – is shrewder than it appears.

Indeed, critics ought only look to France, where President Emmanuel Macron faces mounting instability as the "yellow vest" movement continues to take a severe toll on the French economy and social environment.

The French example – Mr Macron's pivot left to fend off political backlash – shows how Mr Modi's decision to sacrifice some elements of economic liberalisation to win the support of rural and poor voters ahead of national elections may provide unexpected long-term dividends for Mr Modi, the Indian economy, and foreign investors in India.

Towards the end of last year, anger over Mr Macron's proposed fuel tax hikes quickly evolved into a full-blown, violent social movement across France.

After being called "shameful" by the President, within days hundreds of thousands had joined this movement with the goal of forcing Mr Macron to directly engage with the serious economic problems facing rural France.

Despite Mr Macron's televised apology and series of concessions made since then, over 70 per cent of the French public has remained largely sympathetic to the cause.

By first ridiculing and then failing to promptly address voter frustration and fears over rising inequalities, Mr Macron has

single-handedly justified and ensured the survival of a movement whose effect is to continuously destabilise his administration with little regard for any economic consequences.

Indeed, analysts anticipate a significant reduction in year-end economic growth as major tourist attractions and shopping centres in Paris were forced to remain closed over much of the holidays because of the protests.

Furthermore, the yellow vests' contradictory demands of more government programmes and less taxation will continue to hobble Mr Macron's administration in its budget planning and efforts at

While the BJP's turn to populist policies might seem problematic to investors in the short term, these policies are India's best shot at maintaining the stability required to ensure its long-term economic health. The idea that a pan-Indian farmers' movement, built off the French yellow vests, could seriously destabilise the country may not make sense in the Indian context.

economic reforms going forward, with some protesters even calling for an all-encompassing tax revolution and an overthrow of France's fifth republic.

Just as in France, rural and impoverished populations in India have been hit especially hard in recent months.

The government's controversial demonetisation initiative launched in 2016 and the goods and services tax of 2017 have disproportionately impacted poorer Indians.

The government's most recent employment survey indicates an unemployment rate of 6.1 per cent – India's highest since 1973.

In rural India, food prices have collapsed, resulting in large-scale farmer protests and marches to demand loan relief and higher agriculture prices.

Lastly, rising fuel prices, partially triggered by Venezuela's political instability, are poised to adversely affect India as a net oil importer.

Although the conditions in India may appear ripe for sociopolitical disruption akin to France's yellow vests, Mr Modi's efforts to respond directly to rural resentment diverge strategically from Mr Macron's original dismissal of French rural strife and may ultimately steer the country away from this type of conflict.

The BJP's interim budget for the coming fiscal year builds on several state- and national-level political programmes to manage rural distress and prevent further farmer suicides, such as the

Maharashtra government's farm loan waiver scheme unveiled in June 2017, and Mr Modi's pledge to provide healthcare to 500 million people last year, one of the world's most ambitious healthcare plans.

Ultimately, while the BJP's turn to populist policies might seem problematic to investors in the short term, these policies are India's best shot at maintaining the stability required to ensure its long-term economic health.

The idea that a pan-Indian farmers' movement, built off the French yellow vests, could seriously destabilise the country may not make sense in the Indian context. However, unaddressed rural unrest could very well sweep an unstable coalition government into power in the next election cycle, sidelining any meaningful big-ticket reforms and promoting an environment even more hostile to foreign investment.

Mr Modi's embrace of short-term protectionist and populist policies may therefore be what saves foreign investors in India from facing the crisis currently plaguing the French economy.

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• Cybele Greenberg is a research associate at the Council on Foreign Relations focused on international economics. She previously worked in corporate finance in New York, Boston, and Paris. Jonathan Jeffrey is a political risk consultant and writer based in Washington.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER
Showers expected in the afternoon.
High 34 deg C **Low** 25 deg C
24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 33 to 49 (Moderate)



PHOTO: XINHUA

Pinnacle of Chinese culture

The Jinding, or Golden Palace, at Wudang Mountain in Hubei Province, provided a majestic sight while blanketed in snow. The mountain spreads out over 300 sq km, encompassing about 72 peaks, 24 streams, 11 caves and numerous ponds.

Aside from its breathtaking scenery, Wudang Mountain is a popular destination for visitors who are drawn to its cultural offerings – chiefly its martial arts and Taoist heritage, as well as its historic temples and palaces.

The mountain has been called the Cradle of Taiji, and is regarded as the seat of Taoist culture. It continues to draw budding martial arts proponents, who go to the various schools there to hone their gongfu skills.

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723

NUMBER OF ARRESTS MADE LAST YEAR BY PUBLIC TRANSPORT SECURITY COMMAND B2

Chas patient not subsidised for polyclinic X-rays

She also could not use Medisave as her referral was from a private family doctor

Salma Khalik
Senior Health Correspondent

Coughing for months, 73-year-old Yeo Saw Hua visited the nearby Pasir Ris Polyclinic. The cough mixture she was prescribed did not ease her condition.

So she went to see a general practitioner (GP) at a Chas-registered private clinic, which charges government-subsidised fees to holders of a Community Health Assist Scheme (Chas) card or Pioneer Generation card. She has both.

The doctor at Pasir Ris Clinic & Surgery suspected she had something more serious than a cough and sent her back to the polyclinic for an X-ray.

The bill for two X-rays, which she had to pay in cash, was \$91.10.

Confused, she asked why the bill was not subsidised. She was told that as she was referred there by a

private GP, her cards did not entitle her to any discount. She also had to pay GST. As a "private" patient, she also could not use her Medisave.

If the X-rays had been requested by a polyclinic doctor, she would have had to pay much less, and could also turn to her Medisave.

Her husband appealed to their MP, Mr Zainal Sapari of Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC, who brought up the issue in Parliament last month. He asked why polyclinics were charging patients private rates when they were referred by an approved Chas clinic and hold a Chas card.

In a written reply, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong said: "Some private GPs today refer their patients to polyclinics for specific services, such as X-rays or tests."

"As these patients are not assessed by polyclinic doctors, our doctors are unable to determine whether the ordered tests or investigations are appropriate. Therefore,



USEFULNESS OF CHAS CARD

Why does the Ministry of Health ask us to use the Chas card to see a GP when we can't get a subsidy or even use our Medisave when we need to get an X-ray?

MR CHARLIE LIM, 73, whose wife had to pay the "private" patient rate for the X-ray.

they are considered private health-care services, for which polyclinic subsidies do not apply."

He added that the Ministry of Health (MOH) will review how it can better support Chas patients managed by Chas GPs, "including ways to improve access to clinically appropriate subsidised tests and investigations".

In Madam Yeo's case, the X-ray revealed fluid in her lungs.

Two days after that, her breathing was so laboured that she had to be admitted to a hospital.

Her husband, Mr Charlie Lim, 73, drives a taxi two days a week and earns \$800 to \$1,000 a month.

He asked: "Why does the Min-

istry of Health ask us to use the Chas card to see a GP when we can't get a subsidy or even use our Medisave when we need to get an X-ray?"

Dr Joshua Lim, a GP at the clinic that Madam Yeo visited, said he was aware that polyclinics charge Chas card holders private rates when referred to by a private GP.

When he raised the matter with the Agency for Integrated Care, he said he was told that was the way things are.

He said there is a subsidy if the GP refers patients to a public-sector doctor first, but this will delay the whole process.

Mr Zainal said in his Facebook post: "I believe MOH, as a matter of

professional courtesy and trust in the Chas GPs, should consider any follow-up tests/investigations ordered by the Chas GPs as necessary and appropriate."

He said GPs send patients to the polyclinics as they do not have the equipment. He added: "Since, Chas patients were means-tested, they should be given the subsidised rates at polyclinics for follow-up tests or investigations ordered by private Chas GPs. Otherwise, it would disincentivise Chas card holders to seek treatment at Chas GPs and (they would) continue to go to polyclinics."

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Left: Part-time taxi driver Charlie Lim with his wife's polyclinic bill. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

Above: Madam Yeo Saw Hua went to a Chas-approved clinic after treatment at Pasir Ris Polyclinic did not ease her condition.

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SCAN TO SHOP

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TransCom officer Muhammad Sayyid Sulaiman Mohamed Fauzi (in front) and his team patrolling MRT stations in Singapore.
ST PHOTOS: NG SOR LUAN



TransCom officers (from left) Zachery Yip, Mohamed Tharves Jafar Jafarullah and Ali Hassan Khan checking the personal particulars of a member of the public during their patrols around MRT stations.



Sergeants Zachery Yip (in front) and Muhammad Sayyid Sulaiman Mohamed Fauzi (next to him) starting their patrols with their team.



Officers monitoring the security of MRT stations and bus interchanges through closed-circuit television at the TransCom operation room.



Sergeant Zachery Yip collecting his equipment, including a revolver and handcuffs, from the TransCom armoury.

Transport security officers made 723 arrests last year

Number nabbed in spot checks by unit that turns 10 this year up from 646 in 2017

Fabian Koh

Officers from the Singapore Police Force Public Transport Security Command (TransCom) unit made 723 arrests last year as a result of spot checks conducted on Singapore's transport network, up from 646 in 2017.

The unit, comprising 500 full-time national servicemen (NSFs) and over 100 regular officers, was created in 2009. It turns 10 this year.

The unit has at its disposal over

20,000 cameras located island-wide in the public transport system, allowing officers to monitor train stations on all lines, as well as bus interchanges.

The officers, who don light grey berets, patrol MRT stations, bus interchanges and the surrounding areas. They operate in teams of four. Each group leader carries a taser, in addition to other equipment.

Special Constabulary Sergeant Mohamed Tharves Jafar Jafarullah, who has been with the unit for 15 months, said there is a never a dull day.

The 23-year-old NSF recalled a recent arrest. His team had been monitoring a man behaving suspiciously at Chinatown MRT station.

He ran when the officers approached him. A chase ensued and he was tackled to the ground near the station. Sgt Tharves said: "He was taken down in the middle of the road. The traffic light was red then, so all the cars had stopped."

The team found about \$35,000 in cash in the man's slingbag, along with about 40 ATM cards bearing different names. He later admitted to and was arrested for assisting in remote gambling activities.

Each year, more than 50,000 commuters are checked by TransCom officers.

NSF Sgt Ali Hassan Khan, 23, said that before checking a person, the officers will ask if he wants privacy. He has the option of being checked in a staff room or first aid room at the station.

During holiday seasons, TransCom officers go on patrols with the K-9 unit under the Special Operations Command.

The officers said it is not all about security checks. Commuters have approached them to ask for directions and there are occasional requests for a photograph, which they have to decline.

NSF Sgt Muhammad Sayyid Sulaiman Mohamed Fauzi, 20, said: "People do approach us with questions. It could be to ask for directions or to ask for assistance."

The unit had its beginnings as the Police MRT Unit, which was formed in 2005 in the light of growing global security threats and the vulnerability of the public transport system to attacks.

In July that year, terrorists struck London with coordinated bombings on three underground trains and on a bus.

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Keeping public transport safe



SCAN TO WATCH



<http://str.sg/transcom>

Island-Wide PWS Sounding

In support of Total Defence Day, SCDF will be sounding the "Important Message" signal through the island-wide Public Warning System (PWS) on Friday, 15 February 2019 at 6.20pm. When you hear the signal, tune in immediately to any local radio/TV station for a message which will explain the different PWS signals and what you need to do in the event that the PWS is activated during a national emergency.

When the PWS sirens are sounded, SCDF will also send out a message via the SGSecure mobile application with information on Total Defence Day and the PWS.

During a national emergency, you may need to seek shelter within your household shelter. It is therefore important for you to be able to continue receiving emergency broadcasts and updates from within the shelter.

- If you have a radio with you in the household shelter, you will be able to receive the emergency broadcasts through your radio.
- You will also be able to receive these emergency broadcasts through radio or television streaming apps on your smartphones and other electronic devices. If you are reliant on your home WiFi for internet access, we advise that you check that you are able to receive signals from your WiFi routers from within the household shelter. If you are not able to receive the WiFi signals, you may wish to shift your WiFi router to within 5 metres from the shelter.
- Local television stations will also carry the emergency broadcasts. However, due to the physical construct of the household shelters with reinforced walls and the nature of the digital TV signals, you may not be able to receive digital TV signals from within the household shelters.

To know more about the PWS and Civil Defence Shelters, visit www.scdf.gov.sg and download the Civil Defence Emergency Handbook (8th edition).



Commentary

Think through subsidy issue of Chas patients referred for polyclinic tests



Salma Khalik

Senior Health Correspondent

It sounds as if something is amiss when patients with the Community Health Assist Scheme (Chas) card, which entitles them to government subsidies at private GP and dental clinics, are charged private rates when those same clinics refer them to a polyclinic for tests.

Was this a considered decision or an oversight that has become entrenched?

After all, it appears to run counter to the principles behind the Chas scheme and, by extension, the Pioneer Generation (PG) scheme, which provides even higher subsidies for seniors in recognition of their contribution in building the nation.

Holders of Chas cards have been means-tested to qualify for subsidies when they are treated in the private sector. This is both to ease the workload at polyclinics, as well as to make it more convenient for poorer people to seek medical care.

The subsidies are extended to them at over 1,000 private clinics registered with the Ministry of Health (MOH) under the Chas scheme.

Any Singaporean, no matter how

rich, who sees a polyclinic doctor is given subsidised consultation, medication and tests.

Yet, when a patient with a Chas or PG card is referred to a polyclinic for an X-ray or a blood test by a registered Chas clinic, the patient is charged the full private rate, with the goods and services tax thrown in.

Was this because, when Chas was introduced in 2012, this aspect was not examined and the practice of charging patients referred for tests by private general practitioners as "private patients" was automatically extended to them?

If so, it makes sense, but the anomaly needs to be corrected. Otherwise, it would unfairly penalise the 1.3 million Chas and PG card holders who expect to get subsidised primary care outside of polyclinics.

But that was not the reason Health Minister Gan Kim Yong gave to Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC MP Zainal Sapari, who had asked in a parliamentary sitting last month for the rationale behind this practice.

In a written reply, Mr Gan explained that such patients are charged private rates as they have not been assessed by polyclinic doctors, who "are unable to determine whether the ordered tests or investigations are appropriate".

He concluded: "Therefore, they are considered private healthcare services for which polyclinic subsidies do not apply."

Far from clearing the air, this explanation raises more questions, as it implies that the MOH or the polyclinics are calling into question

the abilities of the doctors in private practice to appropriately refer patients for tests.

If the diagnostic abilities of these private GPs are in question, then why is the MOH subsidising the care they give to patients with the Chas card? More than \$150 million of taxpayers' money is spent on such subsidies each year.

On the other hand, if the ministry trusts them to properly treat such patients, then shouldn't that trust be extended to cover the tests these GPs think their patients need?

GPs, especially when treating Chas card holders, are aware that their patients might find the cost of healthcare onerous and would be careful about sending them for tests, which, even when subsidised, the patients would have to pay for.

Questioning their decision by not extending subsidised tests to patients they refer to the polyclinic is an indictment of their professional judgment.

If records show that some GPs tend to frequently send patients for unnecessary tests, perhaps they should be counselled. This would benefit their non-Chas patients too.

Many patients were not aware that they would be charged more than double the subsidised amount for tests when referred by a Chas GP.

Knowing that, would people be as willing to seek medical care at private Chas clinics or would they again flock to polyclinics where everything is subsidised and a Chas card is not needed?

This would defeat the purpose of having Chas. The ministry needs to think this through.

It is good that Mr Gan has promised that the ministry will review how it "can better support Chas patients whose care is managed by Chas GPs, including ways to improve access to clinically appropriate subsidised tests and investigations".

Hopefully, it will lead to better care for PG and Chas card holders, and a more robust healthcare system.

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DSO, ST Engineering in satellite tech venture

New firm to commercialise such imagery data for sectors like construction and agriculture

Lester Wong

ST Engineering has announced that it is setting up a joint-venture company with DSO National Laboratories to unlock business opportunities with new satellite technology.

Called ST Engineering Geo-Insights, it will package data gleaned from satellite imagery for customers in sectors such as construction, maritime safety and agriculture.

Such new space technologies are an opportunity for Singapore to create new industries, said Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing at the Global Space and Technology Convention, where the agreement was signed.

“As a land-constrained country, Singapore’s challenge has always been about how we can transcend our geographical limitations, and space technology allows us to do exactly that,” said Mr Chan at The St Regis Singapore hotel.

“It has a direct impact on the kind of business opportunities and jobs we can create... in the sense of applications in surveillance, telecommunications, encryption and data analytics.”

The advent of low-cost small satellites has disrupted the satellite industry, said ST Engineering yesterday.

Typically weighing around 500kg, and up to 10 times cheaper and 20 times faster to build than traditional large models, small satellites are making large volumes of satellite imagery readily available, as they can be launched in bulk for wider coverage areas.

ST Engineering previously entered into a joint venture with DSO and the Nanyang Technological University in 2011 to design and produce earth observation satellites.

Mr Tang Kum Chuen, ST Engineering’s president of satellite systems, said: “We are taking the information from the satellites we built under the first venture and fusing it

with information on the ground.

“So, for example, we match the data we get against the customer’s blueprint of their construction project and tell them whether construction is progressing as planned or if there has been any deviation.

“This is very useful for mega construction sites, which are nearly impossible to monitor from the ground.”



PHOTO: ST ENGINEERING

Another potential use of the satellites, he added, is in maritime safety. Ship movements can be tracked to check for any illegal activities or deviations from maritime traffic rules.

“With the data, we can alert the

port authority in advance so that the appropriate action can be taken quickly,” Mr Tang said.

Mr Jonathan Hung, president of the Singapore Space and Technology Association, said that high costs have always been a barrier of

entry for potential players in the US\$350 billion (S\$476 billion) space industry, but low-cost small satellites are a game changer for countries such as Singapore.

“Singapore is not known to be a space-faring nation, but we have a

lot of other capabilities, like in smart manufacturing,” he said.

“Lower costs allow us to be agile and bring our capabilities to bear on various applications.”

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From far left: Minister for Trade and Industry Chan Chun Sing, DSO National Laboratories chief executive Cheong Chee Hoo, ST Engineering Electronics president Ravinder Singh, and ST Engineering president and CEO Vincent Chong at the signing of an agreement between ST Engineering and DSO yesterday to set up a joint-venture company to unlock business opportunities with new satellite technology.

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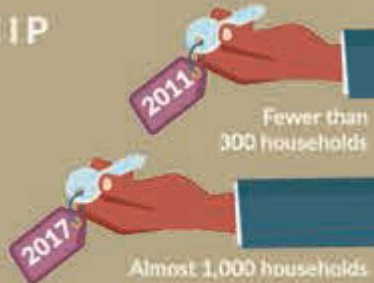
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MR JONATHAN HUNG, president of the Singapore Space and Technology Association, noting that high costs had been a barrier of entry for potential players in the \$476 billion space sector.

SAF regular found dead; foul play not suspected

A 33-year-old Singapore Armed Forces regular was found motionless at a stairway landing of a building in Kranji Camp II yesterday.

He was pronounced dead on site at 5.30pm by an SAF medical officer, 20 minutes after he was found.

According to a statement last night from the Ministry of Defence, his death was not training related.

The police also do not suspect any foul play after preliminary investigations. The Ministry of Defence and the SAF are assisting the family in their time of grief, the statement added. Investigations are ongoing.

Planting seeds of empathy with book on special needs boy

Minds launches first of series of six illustrated books to promote greater integration islandwide



Pupils of Fernvale Primary School and Fernvale Gardens School with therapy dog Baloo and members of Therapy Dogs Singapore yesterday. In line with the plot of the first book (above) in the series, therapy dogs were brought to the book launch for students from both schools to play with. ST PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI

Shabana Begum

For more than a year, Hoon Shu Yen and Nur Marsha Danisha have been spending their Monday afternoons poring over books in the library of Fernvale Primary School.

But Shu Yen is a pupil at the adjacent Fernvale Gardens School, which comes under the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (Minds). As a result of a weekly, 45-minute joint reading scheme started in 2017, both 11-year-old girls have become friends.

The two schools are unique in Singapore in that they are linked by a "Friendship Gate" to encourage interaction between their students.

Said Nur Marsha, who is in Primary 6: "I joined (the scheme) because I wanted to help them read confidently and make them happy."

To promote greater integration islandwide, Minds launched the first of a series of six illustrated children's books yesterday. The first, titled Not So Scary After All, explores how a boy with special needs overcomes his fear of dogs with help from those around him. In line with the plot, therapy dogs were brought to Fernvale Gardens School for students from both schools to play with.

Fernvale Gardens principal Gerard Vaz said it was vital for children to be introduced to individuals with special needs from an early age. "They haven't begun to form any preconceived notions and ideas about what special needs individuals are like. It is the perfect time to plant the seeds and show that there are a lot of



Lin Wenhui Veryn (left), 12, of Fernvale Primary crossing the "Friendship Gate" with Matilda Chan Jia Ling, 18, of Fernvale Gardens School. The gate is aimed at spurring interaction between the schools.

commonalities between them and people with special needs. The very theme of the book is that special needs pupils are no different."

Local author Lianne Ong wrote the collection. The remaining five books will be released this year, and there will be about 3,000 copies for each book.

Minds has sent copies of the first volume to its 16 mainstream primary and secondary school partners. The volume will be included in their curricula and stocked in their libraries. The books will also

be given to the 900 students at all four Minds schools in Singapore.

Fernvale Primary principal Bala-krishna Vyjanthimala said: "Our children have gained confidence through the reading programme. They have learnt to be patient, because they get to understand that the mannerisms of the children from Fernvale Gardens are different. They have learnt to respect somebody who is different from them and, above all, gained empathy."

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Local author Lianne Ong, who wrote the six illustrated children's books, conducting a storytelling session of the first book, Not So Scary After All. The remaining five books will be released this year.

Six million dating app accounts hacked

Choo Yun Ting

Users of dating app Coffee Meets Bagel (CMB) received an unexpected Valentine's Day surprise yesterday.

They received an e-mail from CMB saying some data from their account "may have been acquired by an unauthorised party".

The San Francisco company said it found out about it on Monday.

What was acquired were app users' names and e-mail addresses prior to May last year, CMB said in its e-mail.

It also said it has taken several steps to protect its users, including hiring forensic security experts to carry out a review of its systems

and infrastructure, as well as to look out for suspicious activities.

CMB said it is coordinating with the law enforcement authorities to investigate the breach.

Tech news site The Register, based in Britain, reported on Monday that more than six million CMB accounts were among 620 million accounts hacked worldwide.

The CMB accounts were on sale for 0.13 bitcoin on the Dark Web, The Register said.

Other websites and apps that were hacked include video messaging app Dubsmash, fitness app MyFitnessPal and photography community 500px.

A CMB user in Singapore, a man working in the medical industry who declined to be named, said he

was not too bothered about his data being compromised.

"Given that the leaked details are just my name and e-mail, I'm not too worried," the 28-year-old told The Straits Times.

"My name is public domain knowledge on Facebook and I ignore most of these unimportant e-mails anyway."

CMB has recommended to its users to take extra care when receiving unsolicited communications that ask for personal data or refer them to a webpage asking for personal data.

"We also recommend avoiding clicking on links or downloading attachments from suspicious e-mails."

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Crocodile alert at Lower Seletar Reservoir

Jolene Ang

Water and fishing activities have been scaled back after a crocodile was spotted in the Lower Seletar Reservoir yesterday morning.

PUB noted on Facebook that "members of the public are advised to be alert and to avoid going near the edge of the reservoir water".

It also advised park visitors not to approach, provoke or feed the reptile, but to stay calm and back away slowly if they encounter it and call PUB on 9632 3261.

The reservoir in the Khatib area is bordered by Orchid Country Club, Seletar Country Club and Lower

Seletar Reservoir Park. There are walking and jogging trails around the waterway, which can be used for sailing and fishing.

Ms Lee Bee Wah, an MP for Nee Soon GRC, told The Straits Times she was worried, adding that she has asked PUB to put up signs at Lower Seletar Reservoir as soon as possible.

"I've also warned residents through my Facebook page and grassroots network," said Ms Lee.

The country clubs could not respond by press time to queries on whether they were taking any additional safety measures.

Mr Khondokar Habib, 28, who works in a construction site near the reservoir, said he goes there to fish

occasionally. "I've seen monitor lizards and otters, but never a crocodile," he said.

A viral video was posted online in January last year, showing a reportedly 2m-long crocodile on a footpath at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

The National Parks Board said then that it monitors visitor trails daily, and has set up barricades in the reserve to prevent crocodiles from climbing onto visitor trails.

For the latest case, PUB officers said that they are hunting the crocodile.

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• Additional reporting by Fabian Koh

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- Post-Budget roundtable led by ST associate editor **Vikram Khanna** and industry experts



For more, visit the Budget microsite at str.sg/budget2019

Ofo's bike-sharing licence suspended

Firm misses deadline to meet LTA conditions, must remove bikes in public spots by March 13

Zhaki Abdullah

Chinese firm ofo's licence to operate a bike-sharing service here has been suspended, the Land Transport Authority (LTA) said yesterday.

This comes after ofo missed Wednesday's deadline to meet LTA's regulatory requirements.

For example, it had failed to introduce a QR code-based parking system that would allow its bicycles to be parked only within specified areas.

It had also not updated its app to allow for the banning of users who repeatedly park outside designated areas. LTA said ofo had failed to comply despite being informed of the requirements.

The firm – which has been operating in Singapore since early 2017 – has until March 13 to remove all its bicycles from public spaces.

The Straits Times understands that one requirement which ofo managed to fulfil is to reduce its fleet of bicycles – which last year numbered around 70,000 – to the required 10,000.

However, LTA said it “will only lift the suspension if ofo meets all regulatory requirements”, adding that the firm's licence may be cancelled if it does not show “satisfactory progress”.

Firms that do not comply with LTA regulations face penalties, including a fine of up to \$100,000 for each offence, or the suspension or termination of their licences.

Unlicensed operators can be fined up to \$10,000 and jailed up to six months, with a further fine of \$500 for each day that they continue to operate after conviction.

Ofo was one of six firms awarded a bike-sharing licence in September last year.

Founded in 2014 in Beijing, ofo was once valued at US\$2 billion (\$S2.7 billion) and operated in more than 20 countries.

However, in December, chief ex-

ecutive Dai Wei told employees that the firm was considering filing for bankruptcy.

That month, ST reported that ofo had vacated its Shenton Way premises, and had failed to respond to users' requests for refunds.

Last month, ofo reportedly shut down its international division. It has also laid off hundreds of staff here in recent months, media reports said.

Ofo did not respond to ST's request for comments by press time.

Since December, the firm has not replied to media queries about the status of its Singapore operations.

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One requirement which ofo is said to have fulfilled is to reduce its fleet of bicycles, which numbered around 70,000 last year, to the required 10,000. ST FILE PHOTO

Firms that do not comply with LTA regulations face penalties, including a fine of up to \$100,000 for each offence, or the suspension or termination of their licences.

Supply boat capsizes, sinks near Pedra Branca

A supply vessel was reported to have capsized and sunk in Singapore territorial waters yesterday morning, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said.

The Dominica-flagged supply vessel, Ocean Cooper 2, was in the west-bound lane of the Traffic Separation Scheme – an international maritime route system to manage ship traffic in busy waters – when it sank about three nautical miles from Pedra Branca, a small island 40km east of Singapore.

The incident happened in the Singapore Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping zones.

MPA received news of the sinking at about 7.15am.

All three Indonesian crew members were rescued unhurt by an accompanying supply vessel, Jolly Rachel, belonging to the same company as the vessel which sank. No oil pollution was reported.

MPA issued navigational broadcasts asking ships to navigate with caution in the vicinity after the incident. MPA, which is investigating the incident, also deployed a craft to survey the wreck.

Traffic in the Singapore Strait remains unaffected.

Last month, an undersea cable and pipe-laying ship, the Vanuatu-flagged MV Star Centurion, capsized in Indonesian waters off the Singapore Strait after colliding with a tanker. No deaths were reported in the incident.

Vanessa Liu

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Typhoon survivors to show fighting spirit at Chingay

Dancers from Philippine region hit hardest by Haiyan are among 10 foreign troupes joining parade

Jev Akshay Jeevan

A dance troupe comprising young survivors of a devastating typhoon that hit the Philippines in November 2013 will be performing at this year's Chingay parade.

The 100 dancers, aged between 14 and 25, are from different municipalities in the Visayas group of islands.

The region was hit hardest by Typhoon Haiyan, which claimed more than 6,000 lives and destroyed more than a million homes.

Mr Jan Kairel Guillermo told The Straits Times yesterday that the troupe will be performing a traditional Filipino war dance known as the Dance Of The Pintados, to demonstrate how they rose above the tragedy to emerge stronger.

"People may say that we have already lost everything, but our dance shows them it is actually just the start of everything," added the 25-year-old artistic director of the group known as Leyteam.

Mr Guillermo is from the island of Leyte, where 90 per cent of Tacloban City was destroyed.

Leyteam is among 10 foreign troupes which will perform at this year's Chingay parade, with the other groups hailing from countries such as Cambodia, South Korea, Indonesia and China.

The main parade will feature 6,500 performers from more than 50 local and foreign contingents. The parade will take place tonight and tomorrow night.

Mr Guillermo was part of the production crew of Chingay 2018, and reached out to the organising committee to have his team of dancers perform at this year's parade.

Singapore Chingay and Events Network director Julian Aw said the



The main Chingay parade this year, which takes place tonight and tomorrow night, will feature 6,500 performers from more than 50 local and foreign parade contingents. They include acrobats and dancers from Vietnam (above) and (below, clockwise from left) Indonesia, Cambodia, the Philippines, South Korea and China. ST PHOTOS: CHONG JUN LIANG



committee was impressed by the fighting spirit of the young survivors and decided to include them.

One of the Leyteam dancers, Mr Marco Paolo Chumacara, said: "The dance reminds us that we are a strong people. A warrior people."

The 24-year-old added that the

performance is also a show of appreciation. He said: "We are also using this dance to thank the people of Singapore who helped us with donations to rebuild (our lives)."

In the wake of the disaster, Singapore Red Cross raised more than \$10 million for victims of Typhoon

Haiyan by February 2014.

Leyteam's energetic dance ends with all 100 performers yelling: "Thank you, Singapore!"

The performance also commemorates 50 years of bilateral relations between Singapore and the Philippines and is symbolic of the friend-

ship between the two nations.

The Chingay parade this year coincides with the Singapore bicentennial, which commemorates the 200th anniversary of Sir Stamford Raffles' arrival here in 1819.

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Ng Eng Hen in Germany for RSN submarine launch

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen will be in Germany for the launch of the first of four new submarines for the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) on Monday, the Ministry of Defence (Mindef) said yesterday.

All four Type 218SG submarines are manufactured by German defence contractor ThyssenKrupp Marine System.

The new submarines will replace the RSN's older ones, which are second-hand refurbished vessels from Sweden.

Before the launch ceremony in the city of Kiel, Dr Ng will attend the 55th Munich Security Conference tomorrow and speak at the

Maritime Roundtable on the topic "Bridging Troubled Waters - Deconflicting the South China Sea Disputes", said the Mindef statement.

He will be in Germany from today to next Monday, it added.

The RSN's four Challenger-class submarines, which were made in the 1960s and bought by Singapore between 1995 and 1997, are ageing and two were retired in 2015.

The RSN also has two Archer-class submarines bought in 2005.

The first two Type 218SG submarines are expected to be delivered from 2021, after undergoing sea trials and crew training in Germany.

They will be equipped with improved capabilities such as modern combat systems and Air Independent Propulsion systems, and carry a wider range of mission payloads.

The Munich Security Conference, which Dr Ng is attending for the eighth time, is an international gathering of key foreign affairs and defence leaders. About 600 people are expected to attend this year.

Dr Ng, who is scheduled to meet his foreign counterparts while in Germany, will also speak at the 11th Munich Young Leaders Roundtable tomorrow.

Lim Min Zhang

Security officer did not tell sex partners about HIV status

Shaffiq Alkhatib

An HIV-positive security officer, who used to be a policeman, had sex with two prostitutes in Singapore but did not inform the women about his condition.

Instead, he sent an e-mail to the Ministry of Health (MOH) on April 4, 2017, stating that he had sex with a prostitute whom he suspected of having a sexually transmitted disease.

He then asked the authorities to investigate and repatriate her.

He sent another e-mail four days later, revealing he was HIV positive.

He stated he was having sex with the woman when his condom broke.

The information was referred to

MOH's Surveillance and Enforcement Branch for further investigation.

HIV infection can lead to Aids, a potentially fatal condition.

The 52-year-old man, who cannot be named due to a gag order, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to two charges under the Infectious Diseases Act.

He also admitted to one count each of knowingly living off the earnings of prostitution and allowing his rented apartment to be used as a brothel.

Court documents did not reveal the women's current HIV status and when the man left the Singapore Police Force.

The reason behind his departure from the force was not revealed in

court documents.

The court heard that the women, both Chinese nationals, would not have engaged in sexual activities with him had they known about his condition.

The man first suspected that he had contracted HIV in Thailand in 2003, but did not seek treatment until he was formally diagnosed five years later.

On Jan 14, 2017, he signed a tenancy agreement for the apartment in Geylang.

He later informed members of a group on messaging app WeChat that the unit was for rent at \$80 per day.

Most members of the group were sex workers, the court heard.

He sent the e-mails in April that

year. Court documents did not state why he sent them.

Subsequently, he wittingly allowed three Chinese nationals, between 33 and 39 years old, to provide sexual services in the apartment between June 22 and July 11 that year.

He advised the trio to be careful about their clients so that they would not get caught by undercover police officers.

He had sex with one of the women in June 2017 and engaged the services of another the following month.

The man was offered bail of \$15,000 and will be back in court on April 5.

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More volunteer opportunities for seniors under new pact

Standard Chartered Bank, volunteering body RSVP S'pore ink 3-year partnership

Rahimah Rashith

One silver lining in rapidly greying Singapore is a growing pool of senior volunteers with a wealth of experience and skills.

To tap this pool of talent, new initiatives will be rolled out to create more opportunities for them to volunteer and to train them for the tasks.

This is a collaboration between volunteering organisation RSVP Singapore and Standard Chartered Bank, which signed a memorandum of understanding yesterday.

The key initiatives under the three-year partnership include building a pool of volunteer trainers for a nationwide expansion of a pre-dementia programme. The trainers will help conduct health talks and mindfulness practices, as well as simple physical exercises.

There will also be a pilot inter-generational volunteering programme involving seniors and youth to support the less privileged. Standard Chartered Bank is contributing \$300,000 over three years.

More than 1,000 senior volunteers are expected to benefit from the collaboration. RSVP Singapore chairman Koh Juay Meng said the partnership will “develop the capabilities of seniors and empower them as active volunteers serving the needs of the community”.

“We know that this new wave of seniors are working professionals, technologically savvy and have different wants and needs. They are more discerning and want to make an informed decision on volunteering duties, organisations and outcomes, although they may be unable to commit to long-term volunteering,” he added.

Singapore has one of the fastest-ageing populations in Asia, with 15.2 per cent of the population aged 65 and above as of last September.

By 2050, it will be among the top 10 oldest countries in the world, with an estimated 47 per cent of its population over 65 years old, according to the United Nations.

With an ageing population, the number of senior volunteers has also steadily grown over the years.

In a National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre survey for 2016, published in May 2017, the proportion of volunteers aged 55 to 64 increased from 18 per cent in 2014 to 20 per cent in 2016.

Currently, RSVP Singapore has 2,500 senior volunteers, up from 824 in 2016.

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, who was guest of honour at the signing ceremony, said: “By 2030, the number of Singaporeans aged 65 years and above will be doubled. Many of these seniors have accumulated a wealth of skills and experience, and silver volunteerism is an important means by which society can benefit from their experiences.”

Ms Noorjahan Kamaruddin, 58, who started volunteering with RSVP Singapore five years ago, found the experience meaningful.

The freelance tour guide and soft-skills trainer said: “With more seniors ageing, we have to help ourselves to help others. Volunteering is one way to know more people and keep ourselves healthy.”

rahimahr@sph.com.sg

CATERING TO DIFFERENT NEEDS

We know that this new wave of seniors are working professionals, technologically savvy and have different wants and needs. They are more discerning and want to make an informed decision on volunteering duties, organisations and outcomes, although they may be unable to commit to long-term volunteering.



RSVP SINGAPORE CHAIRMAN KOH JUAY MENG, on the profile of the seniors.



Standard Chartered Bank regional head of corporate affairs and branding and marketing Eva Ang and RSVP Singapore chairman Koh Juay Meng signing the memorandum of understanding yesterday, witnessed by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu. PHOTO: RSVP SINGAPORE

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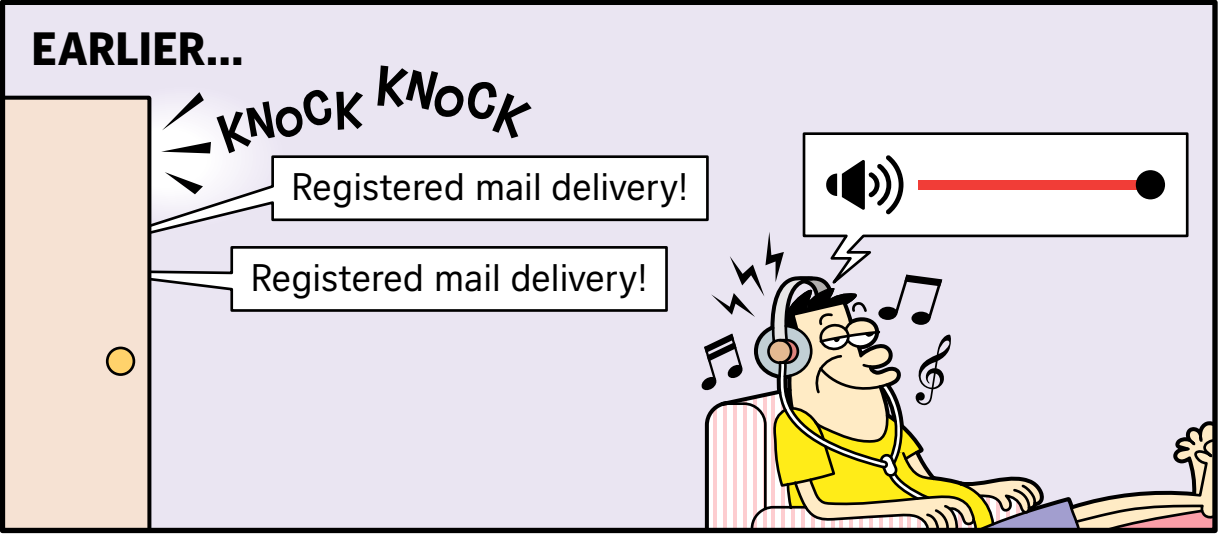
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FORUM

chee chan's TAKE

Rise in complaints of postal delivery service



Why setting hiring quota will help people with disabilities

Recent articles cited arguments against having a quota on the number of people with disabilities in the workplace in terms of its impact on the labour market and the possibility of calls for similar quotas for other minority communities (just 5 in 100 persons here with disabilities have jobs; and Hiring persons with disabilities: Quota won't work, says MSF, both published on Feb 11).

However, the case for having a quota for people with disabilities is compelling.

First, the dismal employment statistics for this group – only 5 per cent of whom have jobs – means that as a country, we are missing out on the economic input of more than 160,000 potential workers, and in a tightening labour market at that.

Second, as Singapore's population ages rapidly and experiences a higher incidence of disability, employers will inevitably have to hire or retain an increasing number of people with disabilities.

If they do not have any experience in working with or

accommodating this group, it would affect the labour force's overall productivity.

Public education campaigns by agencies like SG Enable and the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) have highlighted that people with disabilities are able and willing to work. They also perform as well as their non-disabled peers in the workplace, as long as they are provided appropriate support, access and, most importantly, the opportunity to be hired in the first place.

Reform needed in hawker industry

I support opinion editor Chua Mui Hoong's view that going back to basics is the right approach to preserve and enhance hawker culture (Put hawkers first in the #OurHawkerCulture debate, Feb 3).

The new road map for hawker centres should begin with the National Environment Agency (NEA).

NEA should remain the sole non-profit government department overseeing our hawker centres and, by extension, safeguarding the

interests of 14,000 hawkers and their families.

Social enterprises and other profit-seeking entities are merely superfluous middlemen.

Their involvement brings little unique benefit to hawkers and end consumers, and is nothing that an NEA-led system cannot also deliver.

Moreover, if we accept hawkers as micro-entrepreneurs, we should accord them the rightful status and respect. They should be at the centre of their industry, working

with NEA by participating in the policymaking process.

There is no need to share profits with third-party operators.

Given the importance of rental and ancillary charges to hawkers' margins, the fairest approach for all parties would be to peg these at a minimal baseline rate, combined with an additional levy based on monthly profits.

Such a profit-sharing scheme would provide ease of mind to stallholders, while lowering the barriers to entry for younger hawkers.

Just as Singapore underwent its transformation from Third World to First, so too must our hawker centres. Urgent reform is necessary to safeguard the future of our community dining rooms.

Paul Chan Poh Hoi

WRITE IN: Letters should be meant for exclusive publication in The Straits Times. They should be no longer than 400 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone numbers. The Forum editor reserves the right to edit the letters. For women, please indicate Miss, Ms, Mrs or Madam. Please e-mail your letter to stforum@sph.com.sg. Readers can also respond to letters via Facebook.

Unveil stories of forgotten forefathers

Mrs Vivienne Tan should be commended for writing a book on 19th-century philanthropist Tan Kim Seng (Shedding light on life and legacy of Peranakan pioneer Tan Kim Seng, Feb 10).

I hope her move will set a trend that will unveil the stories of our other long-forgotten forefathers in colonial Singapore who did great deeds for the people and the country.

The pioneering local community leaders in the 1900s up to the outbreak of World War II were "the dominant socio-economic force" at that time, said Dr C. F. Yong in his book, Chinese Leadership And Power In Colonial Singapore. Some examples are Lim Boon Keng, Song Ong Siang, Tan Jiak Kim, Seah Liang Seah and Lee Choon Guan.

Part of the Straits Chinese British Association, they achieved much success in improving living

conditions, introducing Mandarin classes for English-educated Chinese, providing funding for a school of medicine and a college for the arts and sciences and abolishing the rule barring locals from working in the Straits Settlements Civil Service.

The colonial government recognised their strength and value to Singapore and allowed them to take part in local affairs by nominating them as unofficial members of bodies such as the Straits Settlements Legislative Council and the Municipal Commission.

Some of these leaders even dared to talk about self-government. While the colonial ruler had none of that, it marked the beginning of Singapore's post-war anti-colonial movement, which ousted British rule.

These trailblazers are an integral part of our history. Yet, they are unheralded. We know more about our former colonial masters than about them. They deserve more than having roads named after them. Let us then remember and honour them appropriately.

Anthony Oei

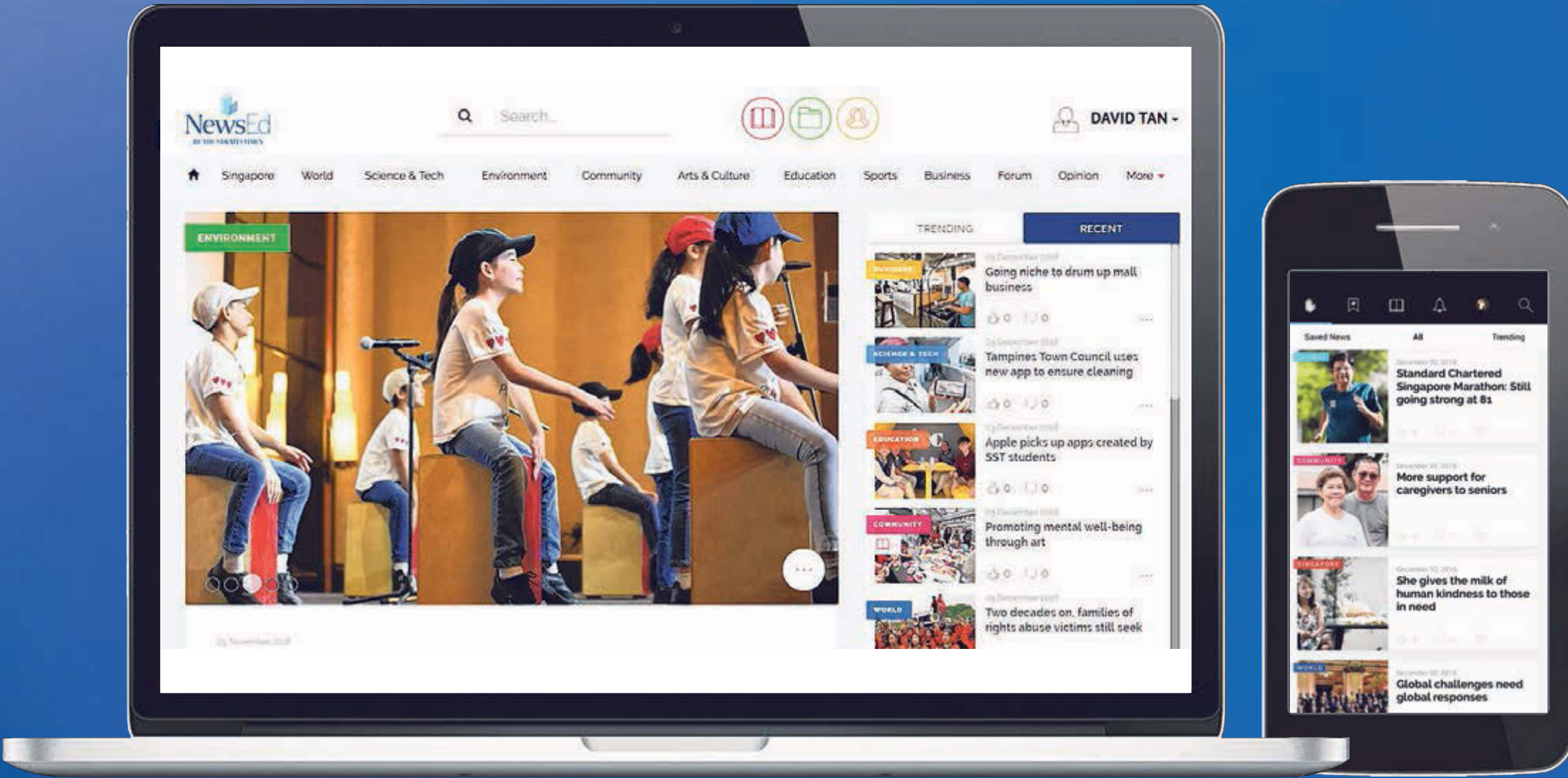
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Take leaf out of Iceland's book

Mr George Pasqual is mistaken if he believes that the local football ecosystem has remained unchanged from when Singapore won three Asean Football Federation Championships (Why is FAS lamenting constraints that haven't changed in ages?, Feb 2).

In the years that the Lions were Asean football champions, we had three players recruited under the Foreign Sports Talent Scheme (FST) in 2004, five naturalised players in the 2007 squad and four new citizens representing Singapore in 2012.

The objective of the FST was to

complement the Football Association of Singapore's (FAS) Youth Development programme by filling key positions in the national team, which was short of local talents.

The foreign recruits were pivotal to our success in those three tournaments.

The constraints highlighted by FAS, such as a small population, limited land, national service commitments and priority to academia, have to be resolved in order for football to be developed further.

Iceland, with a far more challenging football ecosystem,

managed to climb from 131st in the 2012 Fifa world ranking to 22nd last year.

During last year's World Cup, it became the smallest country to ever qualify for the competition.

With a population of only 340,000 compared with Singapore's more than five million, theoretically, it does not make sense that Iceland is at the forefront of world football.

The FAS cited land constraints as a key factor holding us back, but we should not forget that Icelandic footballers live in the Arctic region, where the sun does not

rise for three months every year and the subsoil is permanently frozen.

It is one of the most inhospitable places to cultivate football talent. Iceland's success in building a formidable national team lies in identifying, recruiting and developing young talent from the primary school level.

Football clubs in Iceland keep close tabs on the talent available to them because the country's population is too small for any player to slip through their fingers.

One cannot get more pragmatic than that.

Edmund Khoo Kim Hock

Excerpts from readers' letters

STOP SINGLE WOMEN FROM DOING IVF

I am sad to learn that there is no law in Singapore to prevent single women from going abroad for in-vitro fertilisation (Unwed mums by choice, Feb 3).

Is it really good for the child to be born without a father? If left unchecked, more children will be born into single-parent families which, studies have shown, will create more social problems.

I suggest the authorities introduce counselling sessions to discourage women considering this path.

Lua Eng Chuan

HELP PREGNANT WOMEN ON TRAINS

A common issue raised by pregnant friends is the difficulty in getting a seat on public transport during their first trimester. It is often the most trying part of the pregnancy, yet the baby bump is not obvious enough for other commuters to notice.

Transport for London, for example, supplies a "Baby on Board" badge on request to

pregnant women. Perhaps SMRT and SBS can consider something similar. I believe Singaporeans do not lack compassion, they are simply unaware.

Kloe Ng (Miss)

CHINA PEACE-LOVING? THINK AGAIN

I don't understand how Mr Paul Chan Poh Hoi came to the conclusion that colonisation is not in China's DNA (Western nations must respect China's peaceful rise, Feb 11). Despite its rampant corrupt practices in the past, its mighty power was just enough for it to grab the roughly 9.5 million sq km of land around it.

One must not blindly believe China is peace-loving when, in the South China Sea, it started arbitrarily drawing lines in front of our neighbours' seafronts and building military facilities on disputed islands.

Cheang Peng Wah

Don't make school expedition camps compulsory

News regarding the arrest of a teacher who had worked for the Ministry of Education for 18 years reflects the inherent difficulties in screening educators (Man held over alleged child sex worked for MOE for 18 years, Feb 10).

This is a concern as students nowadays are not merely required to attend school, but to also participate in compulsory overnight camps.

From next year, an expedition-based camp is intended to be rolled out for Secondary 3 students across all schools

(Expedition camp for all Sec 3 students from 2020, Feb 24, 2017).

The safety of thousands of students will then lie in the hands of the educators and external facilitators involved in the camps.

Any lapse in the screening of these educators and facilitators may lead to adverse consequences.

In addition, any failure to adhere to safety protocols in expedition-based camps may result in injuries or could even be fatal.

Expedition-based camps should not be compulsory for students as

the risks of safety lapses cannot be underestimated.

The risks and costs of these expedition-based camps seem to outweigh the benefits. Such camps are not the only way students can learn about teamwork and overcoming challenges.

It is important to draw a distinction between critical needs and beneficial experiences. If such camps are merely beneficial but not absolutely crucial, they should not be made compulsory.

Goh Chin Leng

FORUM ONLINE

1. STEVEN LO CHOCK FEL: Switch to battery-powered leaf blowers.

2. MS LOW SIEW HUA: Balance between creativity, conformity needed in workplaces.

3. CHUA BOON HOU: Silly to think lion dance can improve PSLE results.



MORE LETTERS ON
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Various means-testing criteria used for social schemes

We thank Mr Lee Yong Se for his feedback on the means-testing criteria for our social schemes (Relook using property type as yardstick for rebates, Feb 13).

Government agencies use a range of information about an individual or the household to determine their financial situation – for example, individual income,

household income, number of household members, flat type, and/or annual value of the place of residence.

There are few government schemes that solely use flat type to determine eligibility.

Two schemes that do are the Utilities-Save (U-Save) and the Service and Conservancy Charges Rebate, which are given to

Singaporean HDB dwellers who do not own another property.

Other schemes, such as GST Voucher – Cash, use the annual value of the place of residence and also have an income criterion.

Some Singaporeans residing in lower-value private properties but with low income will receive the GST Voucher – Cash.

We recognise that no criterion is perfect.

In designing different schemes, we select the criteria that are more relevant for the scheme, while minimising complexity where we can.

We regularly review our social schemes to keep our overall system of subsidies fair, with more support for households which require more assistance.

Lim Yui Chien
Director (Corporate Communications)
Ministry of Finance



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A senior journalist at The Straits Times, **Shefali Rekhi** is also an editor at Asia News Network, an alliance of 23 news media. She is one of the key anchors in ST's initiatives to fight fake news.



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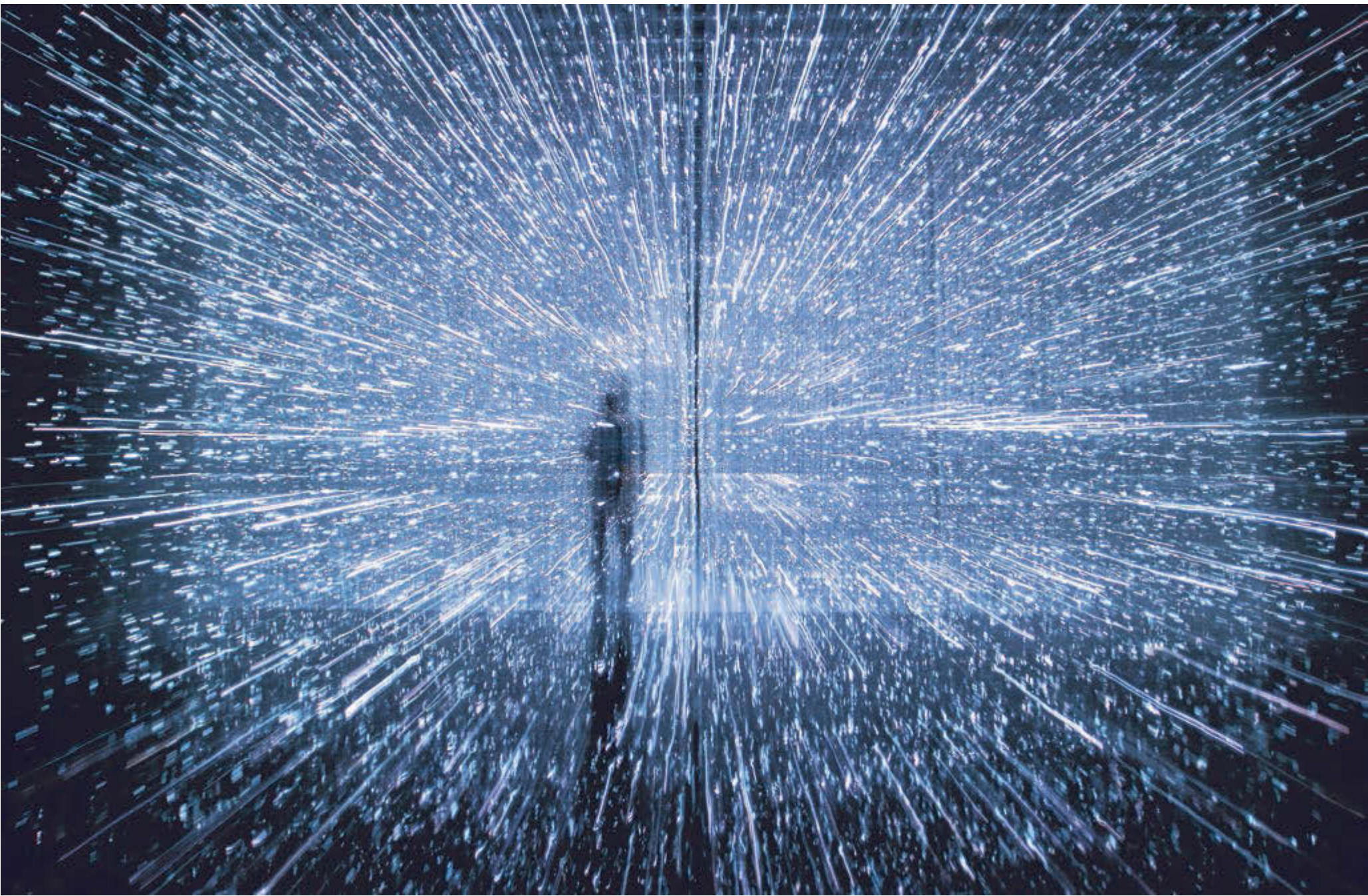
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Despite a good start, Airbus has failed to secure enough orders for the A-380, which was built to transport people to and from major airports that would increasingly face capacity constraints. But travellers have been increasingly opting for point-to-point services instead of flying through major hubs, fuelling the need for smaller aircraft. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Airbus pulls the plug on the A-380, world's biggest jet

But European plane-maker will continue to support 19 of the superjumbos in SIA's fleet

Karamjit Kaur
Senior Aviation Correspondent

European plane-maker Airbus has given up on the loss-making Airbus 380, with the last superjumbo to be delivered in 2021.

Its decision to pull the plug, how-

ever, will not affect the operations of airlines like Singapore Airlines (SIA), which has 19 of the giant jets, as the company has pledged to continue to provide them with the support they need.

Yesterday's announcement of the shutdown – which comes 12 years after the first A-380 took to

the skies in SIA colours in 2007 – coincides with the plane's biggest customer Emirates slashing its order.

The Dubai-based airline, which has about 110 of the giant jets, had intended to grow the fleet to 162 planes. This has been cut to 123.

Emirates has instead placed a fresh order for 70 of Airbus' smaller A-330s and A-350s.

"It's a painful decision (to end the A-380 production)," said Airbus chief executive officer Tom Enders at a conference call with journalists

2021

Year the last Airbus 380 will be delivered.

and analysts. "We've invested a lot of effort, a lot of resources and a lot of sweat into this aircraft... But obviously we need to be realistic."

With Emirates' decision, the order backlog is not enough to sustain production, he added.

Stopping the A-380 production could affect as many as 3,500 jobs, Airbus said, adding that efforts will be made to redeploy the workers.

The first A-380 was delivered to SIA in 2007 with much fanfare, and the first Singapore-Sydney flight made headlines across the world.

To accommodate the giant double-decker jet, major airports, including Changi, made significant infrastructure investments, including buying new aerobridges to ease boarding and disembarking for more than 450 passengers.

Despite a good start, Airbus failed to secure enough orders for the A-380, which was built to transport people to and from major airports that would increasingly face capacity constraints.

Analysts noted that in the last 10 years, travellers have been increasingly opting for point-to-point ser-

vices instead of flying through major hubs. This has fuelled the need for smaller aircraft.

High fuel prices and growing competition among carriers for market share also worked against the viability of the four-engine giant.

Ultimately, these factors forced Airbus to end its production run with an output that is just one-quarter of the 1,000 planes it had targeted to sell.

But they will continue to "still roam the skies for many years to come", Mr Enders said wistfully.

At SIA, the A-380s will keep its status. "There will be no change to our A-380 operations and the aircraft remains an important part of our fleet," its spokesman said.

SIA flies the giant jet to 13 cities: London, Zurich, Frankfurt, New York, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Osaka, New Delhi, Mumbai, Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland.

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MOM mulls over extending Job Redesign Grant for older workers

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

A government grant to help companies make jobs physically easier for older workers has seen "better-than-expected" take-up, and the Manpower Ministry is considering whether to extend it beyond June this year.

More than 1,750 companies have used the enhanced Job Redesign Grant since July 2016 and this has benefited about 20,000 older workers, said Manpower Minister Josephine Teo yesterday. "We'd like to encourage more companies to come on board... Quite often, when they improve the work environment for the seniors, it's not just the seniors who benefit, the rest of the workforce also benefits," she said.

The ministry had aimed to get 700 companies on board and help 3,000 workers over three years with the grant, which was updated in 2016 after its launch in 2013.

The grant gives companies up to \$300,000, or up to 80 per cent of the costs of projects, to create physically easier, safer and smarter jobs for workers aged 50 and older.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Re-



Mr N. Xavier, 52, who mans the poolside towel stand at Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, using a scanner to count towels. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

sort & Spa staff whose jobs have been improved under the grant, Mrs Teo said projects to redesign jobs may not require heavy capital expenditure. "Today, much of the technologies are readily available. It's a question of how you marry the technology with the work processes and make it work for the company."

She said MPs gave interesting suggestions in Parliament on Wednesday on ways to support seniors in employment. This is something very high on the ministry's list of priorities, she added.

She also disclosed that the WorkLife Grant is also under review to strengthen it to encourage more companies to implement flexible work arrangements.

The Job Redesign Grant is part of the WorkPro scheme to help local workers and encourage age-friendly workplaces. In July 2016, the cap for the grant was doubled to \$300,000 for projects targeting older workers.

Rasa Sentosa, for example, sought the grant for two new projects last

year. One involved tagging all towels with RFID or radio frequency identification so that they can be counted easily, and the other installed buzzers in poolside umbrellas so staff can identify guests who need service more easily.

One in 10 of its 373 staff are at least aged 55, said its human resources director Darren Lim, and the hotel is looking for technological tools to make older workers' jobs easier and lighter. He said: "In Singapore, good workers are very precious, and good workers who want to stay with you are even more precious."

Mr N. Xavier, 52, who mans the poolside towel stand, said that on busy days, about 1,000 towels have to be manually counted before and after they are sent to the laundry.

Now, a wave of a wand – or scanner – over the towel cart and the count is done automatically. More importantly, the count will be accurate, he added.

joseow@sph.com.sg

EU-S'pore trade deal: Firms need more clarity on potential perks

Ng Jun Sen
and **Seow Bei Yi**

The hard work to hammer out a trade deal between the European Union and Singapore is almost complete but some firms are still in the dark about the potential benefits.

While corporate Singapore has largely welcomed the pact, there is still a lot of work to be done to get bosses across the wealth of detail.

"Right now, we do not know anything about the free trade agreement," said Mr Ronnie Wong, chief operating officer of the Association of Electronic Industries in Singapore. He added that the deal's perks are still not understood by firms and his association is trying to find out more.

Yet the landmark EU-Singapore Free Trade Agreement would see the removal of nearly all tariffs between both jurisdictions, including to electronics. The deal received strong backing from EU lawmakers on Wednesday, paving the way to its ratification.

CapitaLand International chief executive Gerald Yong said it will provide better market access and business opportunities for both Singapore and EU organisations.

Singapore companies will also be able to bid for more EU government tenders and be treated equally as European firms.

Duties on around 84 per cent of Singapore exports to the 28 member countries of the EU, including Britain, will be removed once the trade deal comes into force.

One effect will likely be an increase in the flow of investment, expatriates and business travellers in both markets, Mr Yong said. This could generate demand for CapitaLand's lodging and commercial properties in Europe, for example.

EuroCham Singapore president Federico Donato said small and medium-sized enterprises from Europe will also gain from the deal, thanks to simplified procedures at the Singapore Customs, less burdensome technical rules and a simplification of rules of origin, among other benefits.

"The agreement is even more important now with other countries becoming a bit more protectionist. For Singapore in particular, as a gateway to Asean and Asia, it's important to have a partner like the EU, which is committed to free trade," he added.

Duties on around 84 per cent of Singapore exports to the 28 mem-

ber countries of the EU, including Britain, will be removed once the trade deal comes into force. This will apply to exports of electronics, pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals and processed agricultural products and Asian food products.

Tariffs for most of the remaining 16 per cent of exports will also be stripped from the third to fifth year after ratification.

But some business associations said more needs to be done to distil the trade pact into industry-specific information.

"We await more clarity on the specifics in order to assess how best to enable our member companies to capitalise on the opportunities," said Singapore FinTech Association president Chia Hock Lai.

Singapore Food Manufacturers' Association president David Tan said that as the pact was mostly negotiated between governments, it is now time to involve various associations in their outreach efforts.

"Food manufacturing is very price-sensitive and if tariffs are removed, perhaps we can shave 10 to 15 per cent off import costs. But that is just a guess – we hope to find out what the real benefits are from the authorities," said Mr Tan.

A seminar held last month to raise awareness of the deal, organised by Singapore Business Federation (SBF), EuroCham, the Trade and Industry Ministry and an EU delegation to Singapore, received an overwhelming response, said SBF chief executive Ho Meng Kit.

The SBF plans to organise more of such events now that the EU Parliament has voted for the pact.

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SEE EDITORIAL A20

HK property market may cool further amid jitters

Trade war, China's slowdown dampening market sentiment

Claire Huang
Hong Kong Correspondent

Hong Kong's overheated property market may be in for further cooling in the Year of the Pig with investors jittery about the global outlook, especially as simmering tensions between the United States and China drag on.

The city's private residential property prices have fallen by about 10 per cent on average since the peak in August last year, although some individual transactions rebounded, said Mr Tom Ko, executive director of capital markets at Cushman and Wakefield Hong Kong.

In some big luxury estates such as Residence Bel-Air in Pok Fu Lam and The Beverly Hills project in Tai Po, average private residential property prices have plunged by 20 to 30 per cent.

That said, if trade tensions between US and China "cool off a little bit" in the coming months, there would be a rebound in the private residential sector, said Mr Ko.

But Mr Denis Ma, JLL's head of research for Hong Kong, held a gloomier view.

"For residential prices, we're saying about 10 to 15 per cent downward turn – basically it reflects our negative outlook for the economy," he told The Straits Times.

Trade tensions between the US and China have added downward pressure to slowing global growth and rising interest rates, which dampen market sentiments.

Mr Ma said 2018 showed that buyers were becoming a lot more cautious "because your sense of job security is diminishing significantly along the course of the year", so transaction volumes in the residential space fell.

Not helping was the government's looming vacancy tax and a measure that is already in place to force developers to sell at least 20 per cent of the total number of units for every batch launched.

Another key driver of the negative market sentiment in Hong Kong is China's slowing economy and a weaker Chinese currency.

To cushion the slowing of China's economy, Beijing would further limit the available capital for overseas investments especially in the real estate sector, said Mr Brock Sil-

vers, managing director of Shanghai-based Kaiyuan Capital.

Before this round of credit tightening, there was a greater flow of Chinese capital in previous years, alongside investments from other foreign countries. These have driven global property values higher.

"China's retreat from global com-

GLOOMY ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

For residential prices, we're saying about 10 to 15 per cent downward turn – basically it reflects our negative outlook for the economy.



MR DENIS MA, JLL's head of research for Hong Kong, on how much private residential property prices could fall by.

mercial real estate markets should add softness to highly China-dependent markets such as Hong Kong and Australia. The depth and duration (of the retreat) will depend upon the severity of China's slowdown, and the size and scope of any new stimulus measures," said Mr Silvers.

Investments in Hong Kong's commercial real estate last year had slowed significantly, partly due to the retreat.

Chinese investors are one of three key players in Hong Kong's property market, aside from the locals and real estate funds.

Chinese funds accounted for 21 per cent of total commercial real estate transactions in Hong Kong last year, slightly up from the average for 2015 to 2017. But by proportion, this has fallen from 28 per cent in the first quarter of 2018 to 5 per cent in the fourth quarter of the year.

Still, Mr Marcos Chan, head of research for Hong Kong, Southern China and Taiwan at CBRE, pointed out that Hong Kong hit a record high in terms of transaction volume last year. "We did a total of HK\$142 billion (\$\$24.7 billion) last year and that was the second highest on record, although that was 20 per cent down from 2017," he said.

Mr Chan believes Grade A office rent would be stable this year, while JLL's Mr Ma said it might inch up given that "vacancy is tight in Hong Kong". But the value of Grade A offices is expected to drop by 5 to 10 per cent this year, according to both of them.

Cushman and Wakefield's Mr Ko thinks 2019 is a year for "natural correction" as commercial properties in the city are already overpriced.

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Hong Kong's super rich took \$27b beating last year: Forbes

HONG KONG • China's slowdown, trade tensions, stock plunges and a softening of the world's least affordable property market helped wipe some US\$20 billion (\$\$27 billion) from the fortunes of Hong Kong's wealthiest last year, Forbes has reported.

The southern Chinese financial hub, which has entrenched income inequality, boasts one of the highest concentrations of billionaires in the world.

But the ultra-wealthy had an uncharacteristically tough time last year, according to the latest list of the city's 50 richest tycoons published by Forbes late on Wednesday.

The group's combined wealth fell just over US\$20 billion to US\$286.75 billion last year, a marked contrast to the year before, when it grew by a collective US\$60 billion to US\$307 billion.

Hong Kong's wealthiest man, Mr Li Ka Shing, who has dominated the list ever since it first came out in 2008, saw some US\$4 billion wiped off his wealth. But with US\$32 billion, he is still ahead of property magnate Lee Shau Kee, whose worth is about US\$30 billion.

Mrs Pollyanna Chu, one of the city's most prominent female entrepreneurs, witnessed the sharpest decline in personal fortune, according to Forbes' estimates – a 75 per cent drop to US\$3.3 billion.

Her wealth via financial powerhouse Kingston Financial was especially vulnerable to the torrid trading on Hong Kong's stock market, which plunged 9.4 per cent last year.

Galaxy Entertainment Group chairman Lui Che Woo lost US\$4.2 billion, while Macau casino share prices significantly dented the fortunes of Ms Pansy Ho and her younger brother Lawrence Ho.

Kingston Securities analyst Dickie Wong said the wealth of the city's tycoons was often intimately linked to the fortunes of the stock market. But he added that there were other headwinds on the horizon.

"The slowing down (of China's) economy and also the trade war between China and the United States – these two will remain key uncertainties if we talk about the economy and the stock market this year," he said.

Trade tensions have already hit some of Hong Kong's wealthiest. Mr Yeung Kin Man and Ms Lam Wai Ying, the husband and wife team behind Biel Crystal, the largest maker of iPhone screens, saw their net worth plunge some US\$6.4 billion, or 57 per cent.

A major winner from the past year was oyster sauce tycoon Lee Man Tat. His wealth doubled to US\$17.1 billion, making him the city's third-richest tycoon.

Forbes compiles its estimates for personal wealth using information from the individuals, stock exchanges, analysts, private databases, government agencies and other sources.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A new property development under construction in the Kowloon district of Hong Kong. Chinese investors are one of three key players in Hong Kong's property market, aside from the locals and real estate funds. Trade tensions between the US and China have added downward pressure to slowing global growth and rising interest rates, which dampen market sentiments. PHOTO: AGENCIE FRANCE-PRESSE

Malaysia's economy gathers pace in Q4 on improved exports

KUALA LUMPUR • Malaysia's economy expanded at a faster pace in the final quarter of last year, ending a year of weakening momentum as resilient exports helped to shore up growth amid a slowdown in global demand from the US-China trade war.

Solid growth in gross domestic

product provides a welcome reprieve for Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's administration, which has faced simmering discontent over rising living costs less than a year after romping to a shock general election victory in May.

The central bank said it expects the economy to remain on a steady

growth path, supported by steady domestic demand and improving external appetite for Malaysia's exports.

"Malaysia will continue to experience quality growth in external demand and that will provide support to growth in 2019," Bank Negara governor Nur Shamsiah Mohd Yunus told a news conference.

South-east Asia's third-largest economy expanded 4.7 per cent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, up from 4.4 per cent in the third quarter. The outcome was in line with the median estimate of a Reuters poll but was better than some economists had expected.

South-east Asia's third-largest economy expanded 4.7 per cent in the fourth quarter from a year earlier, up from 4.4 per cent in the third quarter. The outcome was in line with the median estimate of a Reuters poll but was better than some economists had expected.

Gains from improved exports, however, are likely not enough to propel a sustained rebound of Malaysia's economy, with investment and private consumption growth slowing in the October-December period compared with the past quarter, Capital Economics said. "Consumption growth is likely to slow further as the boost from last year's scrapping of the Goods and Services Tax fades," the London-based economic research firm said in a client note.

"There will be other drags on growth this year, too. Fiscal policy is set to weigh on domestic demand as the government aims to reduce

the deficit."

Private consumption remained a key driver of the economy but grew at a slightly slower pace of 8.5 per cent in the fourth quarter, compared with 9 per cent in July-September.

Full-year 2018 growth came in at 4.7 per cent, just below the government's forecast of 4.8 per cent but far short of the 5.9 per cent pace a year earlier. The government earlier said that it expected 2019 full-year expansion to come in at 4.9 per cent.

Markets barely reacted to the gross domestic product data and remained subdued in afternoon trade.

Electronics and electrical products boosted exports, helped by shipments ahead of higher anticipated US-China trade tariffs, while output from the mining sector also improved, the central bank said.

Malaysia's trade surplus rose an annual 6.9 per cent in the fourth

quarter to RM34.6 billion (\$11.5 billion). In the third quarter, the surplus fell 4.1 per cent from a year ago.

The current account surplus grew to RM10.8 billion for the October-December period.

Datuk Nur Shamsiah said the ringgit depreciated 1.8 per cent on the dollar last year, in line with most regional currencies, but has since rebounded 1.5 per cent since the start of the year.

The central bank expects inflation to be higher on average this year after benign cost pressures in 2018. Full-year 2018 inflation was 1 per cent.

In November, the government rolled out an expanded budget to help boost the economy, but also laid out plans to cut public spending sharply as it looks to slash debt of more than RM1 trillion that Tun Dr Mahathir blamed on the past administration of Najib Razak.

REUTERS

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Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Chee Hong Tat (waving) arriving at the launch of the Service Experience Technology Roadmap yesterday, flanked by Singapore Furniture Industries Council president Mark Yong (wearing dark-rimmed spectacles). ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

Road map to help furniture retailers integrate tech in ops

They can learn topics like tech adoption, data analytics via workshops

Sue-Ann Tan

Furniture retailers are getting more help to integrate technology into their operations. The initiative is part of the new

Service Experience Technology Roadmap for the sector released yesterday. The road map will allow smaller retailers to benefit from workshops that help them understand the challenges in adopting technology

and how to use data analytics, among other topics. Firms will also be guided step by step in how to incorporate new technology into their operations and employ it as they expand. The road map was developed by

the Singapore Furniture Industries Council (SFIC), which represents 95 per cent of established manufacturers here, and the Infocomm Media Development Authority, with the support of Enterprise Singapore. Mr Chee Hong Tat, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, told the guests at SFIC's new year lunch yesterday: "Many businesses and consumers today have a good appreciation of how the furniture industry can benefit from the use of technology and design to enhance product quality and customer experience. "The road map offers a range of solutions aimed at improving the online and offline experiences of customers throughout the entire sales process. Furniture retailers can pick and choose the solutions they need to streamline their business processes and enhance their customer service."

Mr Chee added that Asia's share of global expenditure on furniture has doubled over the past decade, driven largely by increasing urbanisation and rising affluence. The global furniture industry is expected to continue growing by 5 per cent annually. The SFIC launched a road map last year to help companies seize growth opportunities that could arise in Asia in the coming years. It also encouraged furniture businesses to be open to urban living solutions and design products that fit customers' experiences and needs. SFIC president Mark Yong said the industry should also continue with expansion and internationalisation efforts, as well as collaborating across industries. He added that there will be more initiatives to help companies raise productivity by improving the skills among their workforces. There will also be a formal structure to attract young people to join the industry and drive sustainable growth over the long term.

IMPROVING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
The road map offers a range of solutions aimed at improving the online and offline experiences of customers throughout the entire sales process. Furniture retailers can pick and choose the solutions they need to streamline their business processes and enhance their customer service.



MR CHEE HONG TAT, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry.

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Singtel's bottom line was hit by price pressures on its India unit. The telco expects revenue from its core businesses to grow by a low single digit. ST FILE PHOTO



Singtel's Q3 profit falls 14% on weak-performing associates

It was a case of another quarter, another decline in profit for Singtel. The telco's earnings for the three months to Dec 31 fell 14.2 per cent to \$822.8 million due to lower contributions from associates, a decline in NBN migration revenue in Australia and margin erosion in traditional carriage services. It marked the fifth straight quarter of declining profits. Earnings have been down ever since a bumper quarter fuelled by the NetLink NBN Trust divestment bonanza in 2017. The third-quarter results were also short of analyst estimates. Earnings per share fell from 5.88 cents a year earlier to 5.04 cents. Singtel's earnings disappointment stemmed in large part from losses at key associate Bharti Airtel. Higher voice and data use could not offset the ferocious price competition in South Asia, with Airtel also biting the bullet with higher depreciation and amortisation charges on 4G-upgrade spending. Singtel recorded a post-tax share of losses to the tune of \$77 million, compared with a post-tax profit of \$37 million the previous year. But Mr Arthur Lang, head of Singtel's international business, noted that mobile average revenue per user in the South Asian market has still improved by 4 per cent quarter on quarter after the introduction

of minimum recharge plans. "The situation in India continues to be tough. We are monitoring it closely. But we are cautiously optimistic about it," Mr Lang told a morning briefing yesterday. Post-tax profit contributions also fell year on year at regional associates Telkomsel in Indonesia and AIS in Thailand, where service revenue growth was offset by handset subsidies and advertising. But group chief executive Chua Sock Koong said in a statement that Singtel's long-term view on its regional associates remains positive: "We expect the regional markets to revert to more sustainable market structures and deliver long-term profitable growth." Singtel's operating revenue for the quarter rose 0.9 per cent to \$4.63 billion, lifted by growth in information and communications technology, digital services and higher equipment sales. Yet, despite the lift from the enter-

prise segment, revenue at Singtel's core businesses dipped on a poorer showing in the consumer space. Fixed broadband was the only major segment in the Singapore consumer business to notch turnover growth – up a modest 0.7 per cent to \$58 million – amid declines in mobile services and home television and landline services. The management now expects operating revenue from its core consumer and enterprise businesses to grow by a low single digit. Separately, Australia's TPG Telecom dipped its toes into Singapore waters over the year-end festive period with network pilots, joining a market already crowded by the slew of mobile virtual network operators that lease network from the operators. Singtel consumer chief Yuen Kuan Moon said: "TPG... started some free trials and we've not seen a lot of activity beyond that. So the impact is really minimal." Maybank Kim Eng analyst Luis Hilaado maintained his "hold" call on the stock, citing strong growth in Singtel's enterprise and digital life units on economies of scale, as well as receding competition in India. Downside risks included wireless margin compression sparked by TPG in Singapore or Australia and long-term capital expenditure for 5G technology.

AT A GLANCE

REVENUE: \$4.63 billion (+0.9%)
NET PROFIT: \$822.8 million (-14.2%)

BUDGET 2019

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Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will deliver the Budget statement on Monday at 3.30pm



- Live streaming and real-time updates at www.straitstimes.com
- Key announcements in Budget e-mail newsletter. Sign up now at str.sg/newsletters
- Why the Budget matters to you: Facebook Live with ST columnists Ravi Velloor, Chua Mui Hoong and Salma Khalik right after the speech ends

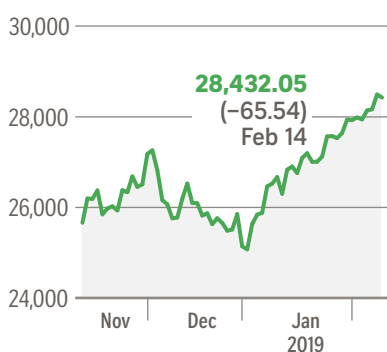


- Live broadcast of post-Budget discussion on **Money FM 89.3** at 7pm
- Analyses of what the Budget means for you
- Post-Budget roundtable led by ST associate editor **Vikram Khanna** and industry experts

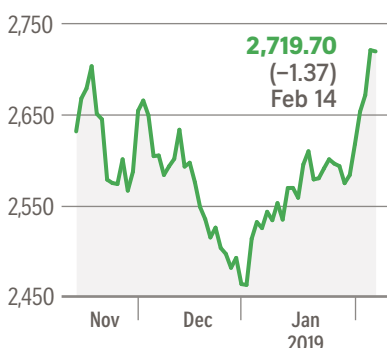


For more, visit the Budget microsite at str.sg/budget2019

Hang Seng



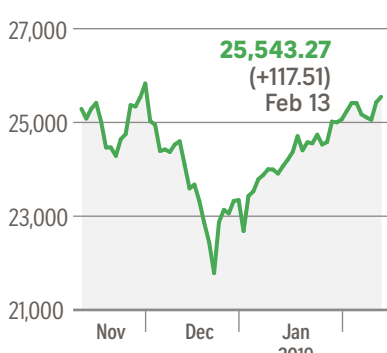
Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

STI extends gains on China data, trade news

Chinese exports beat forecasts; US could extend deadline for tariff hike

Leila Lai

Better Chinese economic data and increased hope that the United States-China trade deadline could be postponed gave local shares another boost yesterday.

Investors took heart from news that Chinese exports outpaced forecasts to rise 9.1 per cent year on year last month, after falling last December.

Analysts stayed cautious about the data, noting that the Chinese New Year holiday affects business activity at the start of the year and makes it hard to compare trends.

Meanwhile, Bloomberg reported that US President Donald Trump is considering a 60-day extension to the deadline for the US to impose higher tariffs on Chinese imports.

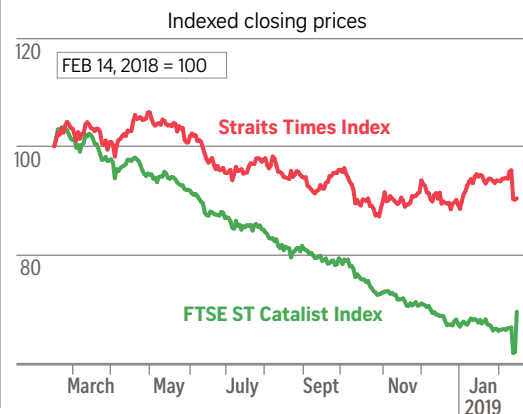
The Straits Times Index (STI) added 8.39 points, or 0.26 per cent, to 3,253.16. Turnover was 1.17 billion shares worth \$1.01 billion, with gainers pipping losers 194 to 191.

Actives were led by the usually thinly traded Advance SCT, which closed flat at 0.1 cent after about 110.8 million shares changed hands. Other heavily traded counters included Rex International, Ezion Holdings and Genting Singapore.

Singtel held firm to \$3.03 on volume of 19.3 million after posting a 14.2 per cent decline in third-quarter

Straits Times Index

Feb 14, 2019
3,253.16 ▲
+8.39 (+0.26%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
3,253.67
Day low
3,235.80
52-week high
3,615.28 (May 2, 2018)
52-week low
2,966.45 (Oct 30, 2018)



FTSE ST Catalyst Index

Feb 14, 2019
303.04 ▲
+0.61 (+0.20%)
Current streak
3 days
Day high
304.36
Day low
302.47
52-week high
469.26 (Feb 21, 2018)
52-week low
300.24 (Feb 1, 2019)

FTSE ST All-Share Index

Feb 14, 2019
788.26 ▲
+1.87 (+0.24%)
Current streak
2 days
Day high
788.26
Day low
784.48
52-week high
868.02 (April 30, 2018)
52-week low
722.91 (Oct 30, 2018)



earnings before the market open.

DBS Equity Research and Citi Research maintained “buy” calls on the stock while RHB Research remained neutral.

Valuetronics, which reported a 2.6 per cent rise in third-quarter

profits on Tuesday, saw its shares retreat 4.05 per cent to 71 cents on volume of 17.1 million.

RHB Research downgraded the electronics manufacturing services firm yesterday to “neutral” from “buy”, citing pressures in its smart

lighting segment that could impact revenue by 7 per cent to 10 per cent.

Despite widespread negativity as investors fear an imminent recession, market watchers find that too much risk is being priced in, resulting in significant undervaluation in many markets.

Mr Kelvin Tay, UBS Wealth Management’s regional chief investment officer, said there is a difference between economic and financial recessions, and advised investors not to be overly pessimistic.

Mr Edward Lim, chief investment officer at independent wealth manager Covenant Capital, noted: “2018 was an overreaction.”

He said valuations in equity markets around the world were below their 30-year price to earnings averages at the bottom of the bear market last December, and Japan, China and emerging markets have yet to fully recover from the slump.

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Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+2	11034	5.8	1.3
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	186	-1	11430	4.7	1
380	298	Capitaland	340	+7	11182	3.5	0.8
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	238	+1	4465	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	950	+2	2765	1.9	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	+5	18478	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2497	+7	4105	5.7	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US890	+5	388	2.4	-
133	85.5	Genting Sing	110	unch	29186	3.2	1.7
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	US25 cd	-0.5	6484	3.2	0.6
77	10.23	HPH Trust USD	US25 cd	unch	19400	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US714	+3	1612	2.8	0.3
7070	1099	JMH USD	US7070	+64	280	2.3	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3905	-73	279	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3632	-18	460	3.2	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	611 cd	-3	1869	4.9	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1168	+3	2137	3.2	1.2
564	455	SATS	508	+10	4312	3.5	3.5
778	672	SGX	772	+4	2574	3.9	0.9
1184	914	SIA	987	+14	2558	4.1	0.8
292	231	SPH	249	-1	1218	5.2	1.1
378	321	ST Engineering	378	+2	3635	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	261	-1	3741	1.9	0.7
358	283	Singtel	303	unch	19340	6.8	1.7
88	57.5	ThaiBev	72	-0.5	22968	0.9	3.5
3037	2380	UOB	2585	-11	1689	3.9	1.2
898	591	UOL	665	+8	999	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1630	-19	1572	3.7	2.1
335	297	Wilmar Intl	330	+5	5627	3	1
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	unch	20562	3.2	1

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED/SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
278	245	Ascendas Reit	275	+2	11034	5.8	1.3
120	105	Ascott Reit	113	-1	4766	6.3	1
74.5	59	Bumitama Agri	69	+1	218	1.1	1.6
178	143	CDL H Trust	157	+2	2065	-	1
192	161	CapitaCom Trust	186	-1	11430	4.7	1
380	298	Capitaland	340	+7	11182	3.5	0.8
243	195	CapitaMall Trust	238	+1	4465	4.8	1.2
1359	780	CityDev	950	+2	2765	1.9	0.8
251	196	ComfortDelGro	243 cd	+5	18478	4.3	2
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2497	+7	4105	5.7	1.4
994	767	DairyFarm USD	US890	+5	388	2.4	-
73.5	59	Far East H Trust	64 cd	+0.5	3645	-	0.7
183	150	First Resources	174	+2	431	3.9	2.3
231	212	Fraser's Cpt Tr	224	-2	673	5.5	107.7
112	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	111	+2	13281	6.2	1.2
133	85.5	Genting Sing	110	unch	29186	3.2	1.7
37	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	US25 cd	-0.5	6484	3.2	0.6
224	167	GuocoLand Ltd	186	unch	42	3.8	0.6
37	23	HPH Trust USD	US25 cd	unch	19400	10.5	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US714	+3	1612	2.8	0.3
7070	1099	JMH USD	US7070	+64	280	2.3	0.8
4078	3155	JSH USD	US3905	-73	279	0.8	0.4
3828	2766	Jardine C&C	3632	-18	460	3.2	1.8
58	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	50	unch	4479	7.4	1.8
835	567	Keppel Corp	611 cd	-3	1869	4.9	1
124	108	Keppel Reit	121	-2	16877	4.6	0.9
151	151	Man Oriental USD	204 cd	+1	55	1.5	1.5
186	152	Mapletree Com Tr	176	unch	8587	5.1	1.2
206	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	199 cd	unch	3487	5.9	1.3
140	118	Mapletree Log Tr	137	+2	8425	5.6	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	123	-1	4732	6.1	0.9
83	73	NetLink NBN Tr	80.5	unch	12564	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1168	+3	2137	3.2	1.2
199	136	OUÉ	155	+2	349	1.9	0.4
87	64.5	OUÉ H Trust	71	unch	637	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	193	+2	433	3.9	1
59	28	Oxley	31	unch	3625	4.8	0.9
291	256	ParkwayLife Reit	279	-1	351	4.6	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	110	-1	317	2	2.6
564	455	SATS	508	+10	4312	3.5	3.5
778	672	SGX	772	+4	2574	3.9	0.9
1184	914	SIA	987	+14	2558	4.1	0.8
336	220	SIA Engineering	235	+1	618	5.5	1.8
292	231	SPH	249	-1	1218	5.2	1.1
103	98	SPHREIT	102	+1	1485	5.4	1.1
378	321	ST Engineering	378	+2	3635	4	5.5
341	243	Sembcorp Ind	261	-1	3741	1.9	0.7
269	149	Sembcorp Marine	161	unch	5151	1.2	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	51.5	+0.5	4352	5.8	7.5
144	88.5	SingPost	95.5 xd	+0.5	2016	3.7	1.3
358	283	StarHub	303	unch	19340	6.8	1.7
270	158	Starhill Gbl Reit	190	+1	2169	8.4	5.8
74	63.5	Suntec Reit	68	-1	2887	6.7	0.8
199	163	Suntec Reit	187	unch	5698	5.3	0.9
88	57.5	ThaiBev	72	-0.5	22968	0.9	3.5
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.8	unch	4093	-	2.8
3037	2380	UOB	2585	-11	1689	3.9	1.2
898	591	UOL	665	+8	999	2.6	0.6
2965	1320	Venture Corp	1630	-19	1572	3.7	2.1
335	297	Wilmar Intl	330	+5	5627	3	1
226	183	Wing Tai	203	unch	390	3.9	0.5
154	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	142	unch	20562	3.2	1
182	116	Yanlord Land	139	-1	2279	4.9	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	138 xd	+2	376	7.5	1
68.5	48	Accordia Golf Tr	57	+2	762	6.8	0.6
86.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	85	unch	647	-	0.9
119	99	Ascendas-tTrust	111	unch	565	5.5	1.3
58	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	131	unch	3850	49.6	0.2
64	48	Banyan Tree	59.5	unch	130	1.7	0.8
333	115	Best World	327	-2	937	1.3	1.7
85.5	76	Boustead	81	+1.5	278	3.7	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	89	-0.5	88	7.9	2.4
632	521	Bukit Sembawang	563	+3	12	3.2	1.1
87	65.5	Cache Log Trust	71	unch	2622	8.3	1.1
52	39.5	Centurion	40.5	unch	41	6.2	0.7
166	104	China Aviation	128	-1	768	3.5	1.1
46	29.5	China Everbright	34.5	unch	1545	1.4	0.7
165	90.5	China Sunshine	131	-2	594	2.3	1.5
103	64	Chip Eng Seng	70.5	-0.5	1103	5.7	0.6
53.5	31.5	Cosco	36	-0.5	7269	-	1.5
700	302	Delong	582	+9	7	-	0.6
27.5	17.5	Duty Free Intl	20	-	-	9.3	1.3
77	67.5	EC World Reit	74.5	unch	154	8.1	0.9
59	47	ESR-REIT	53	+0.5	6937	7.3	1.1
140	92	First Reit	105	-1	1161	8.2	1
152	135	Fraser's Com Tr	146	+1	1277	6.6	0.9
80	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	72.5	unch	817	-	1
25.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	19.5	-0.2	506	5.1	1.2
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	80	+2	2469	2.9	2.5
67.5	52	Health Mgt Intl	57.5cd	+2.5	173	0.6	5.5
279	73	Hi-P Intl	103	unch	3369	24.3	1.6
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	272	+4	205	4.8	0.7
80.5	71	IREIT Global	75.5	+0.5	33	7.9	1.1
37	18.3	Indofood Agri	21.5	-0.5	331	-	0.3
84	43	Japfa	80.5	+1.5	2578	0.6	1.5
76.5	49	KSH	52	-	-	4.2	0.9
85	53	Kepp-KBS Reit USD	67	+0.5	173	9.3	0.6
149	128	Keppel DC Reit	145	unch	3147	5	1.4
189	132	Keppel T&T	187	-1	46	-	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	8.2	-0.1	4971	-	1
71	44.5	Lian Beng	48.5	unch	106	4.6	0.4
40.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	23.5	-0.5	10820	14.6	0.9
53	29.5	MM2 Asia	30	unch	1722	-	1.7
95	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	86.5cd	+0.5	1361	6.4	0.8
120	95	Metro	99.5	-1.5	342	5	0.6
21	5	Noble	8.1	susp	-	-	-
63.4	45	OUE Com Reit	49	-0.5	698	7.1	0.7
66	54	PEC	56.5	+0.5	78	3.5	0.6
39.5	17	POSH	18.4	+0.1	432	-	0.5
64.5	44.5	Q&M Dental	46.5	-1	242	3.5	3.3
110	55.5	QAF Ltd	70	unch	70	7.1	0.8
124	96	Riverstone	112	unch	188	2.1	3.7
54.5	22	SIIC Environment	35	unch	270	-	0.6
45	38.5	Sabana Reit	41.5	unch	1933	7.7	0.7
119	91	Sheng Siong	108	-1	668	3.1	6
25.5	3.3	Sino Grandness	6.3	+0.8	12977	-	0.1
69	56	SoilbuildBizReit	60.5	+0.5	874	8.7	1
129	80.5	Tianjin ZX USD	92.5	-0.5	313	-	0.8
46.5	32.5	Tuan Sing	38.5cd	unch	553	2.3	0.4
136	54	UMS	68.5	unch	4418	7.3	1.6
112	58.5	Valuetronics	71	-3	17123	6.4	1.6
15	8.3	Ying Li Intl	12.4	-0.1	3404	-	0.3
48.5	24	Yoma Strategic	34.5	unch	1932	0.7	0.9
33	16.1	Yongnam	17.2	unch	1132	-	0.3

Levi's to return to NYSE after over 30 years

Jeans maker sets initial IPO size at \$136m; it may be valued at \$6.8b on debut, says report

NEW YORK • Jeans maker Levi Strauss & Co on Wednesday filed documents to list itself on the New York Stock Exchange, seeking to return to public markets after more than three decades.

Levi's, one of the world's biggest denim brands and the inventor of blue jeans, faces rapid changes in consumer tastes as people shop for cheaper store brands and athleisure apparel.

Last year, rival VF Corp said it would spin off its less profitable Wrangler and Lee jeans business into a publicly traded company, allowing it to focus on Vans and its outdoor wear businesses to help improve profit margins.

The 145-year-old company, which intends to list as "Levi", set a placeholder amount of US\$100 million (S\$136 million) to indicate the size of the initial public offering (IPO). The final size could be different.

The San Francisco, California-based company could be valued at around US\$5 billion (S\$6.8 billion) when it debuts, a CNBC report said in November. The Haas family, which traces its lineage to company founder Levi Strauss, owns almost 59 per cent of Levi's. A market valuation of US\$5 billion would give the



The Haas family, which traces its lineage to company founder Levi Strauss, owns almost 59 per cent of the well-known Levi Strauss & Co. A market valuation of US\$5 billion (S\$6.8 billion) would give the family a combined net worth of at least US\$2.5 billion. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

family a combined net worth of at least US\$2.5 billion.

Bavarian-born Strauss emigrated to New York in 1848 and was lured to San Francisco by the California Gold Rush. Failing to find much gold, he started a West Coast branch of his brothers' wholesale dry goods business and called it Levi Strauss & Co. One day he received a letter from a customer, a Nevada tailor named Jacob Davis, who had started designing pants with rivets to make them last longer. He needed a business partner and Strauss was eager to collaborate.

The patent for the first pair of blue jeans was granted to the partners in 1873. When Strauss died unmarried and childless in 1902, the bulk of his US\$6 million estate (worth US\$175 million in today's dollars) passed to his four nephews and other relatives.

But it wasn't until after World War II that Levi's gained renown as a fashion product, having got a boost in global exposure from US soldiers sporting the brand. Western movies and Hollywood stars like James Dean further burnished its fashion cred.

The company's biggest individual shareholder is Ms Mimi Haas, with a 16.7 per cent stake, according to a prospectus. She is a vice-chair of New York's Museum of Modern Art and the widow of Levi Strauss' grand-nephew by marriage, Mr Peter Haas Sr. He and his brother, Walter, succeeded their father, Walter Sr, in running the business in the 1940s and helped oversee the first IPO in 1971. Other major shareholders of the business include Peter's son, Peter Jr, and daughter Margaret, cousin Robert Haas and family members Daniel and Jennifer Haas.

Levi's is required to post quarterly earnings with US regulators as its Japanese arm, Levi Strauss K K, is publicly traded in Tokyo.

In its latest report, the American apparel company said sales rose nearly 9 per cent to US\$1.59 billion. Its filings also show that it has halved its debt load over the last two years.

Levi's sells its products in more than 50,000 retail locations, including about 3,000 stores and shops-in-shops across 110 countries. It sells apparel under the Levi's, Dockers and Denizen brands.

With Levi's IPO filing, the company joins a list of high-profile companies seeking to go public this year including ride-hailing firm Uber Technologies, photo-posting app firm Pinterest and home-renting company Airbnb. REUTERS, BLOOMBERG

Company Briefs

Singapore Airlines

Singapore Airlines yesterday posted a 27 per cent drop in net profit for the third quarter to \$284 million from a restated \$389.3 million a year ago, on the back of weaker operating profit that was exacerbated by share of losses in the group's joint ventures, namely NokScoot.

Group revenue rose 6.5 per cent to \$4.3 billion led by stronger flown revenue, due to a 7.7 per cent growth in passenger demand over the period. The improved top line helped offset net fuel cost that soared by 22.2 per cent, with operating profit for the three months to December at \$388 million, down 14.5 per cent.

Fuel cost before hedging for the airline group rose by \$285 million, largely owing to a 21.1 per cent or US\$16 per barrel jump in average jet fuel price which was partially alleviated by a larger hedging gain versus last year, said the airline.

While the parent airline company's operating profit rose marginally by 0.8 per cent to \$369 million, driven by a healthy 6.6 per cent rise in revenue that outpaced higher expenditure, SilkAir and Scoot saw a weakening in operating profits owing to higher net fuel bill.

SIA Engineering's operating profit fell nearly 16 per cent to \$16 million on the back of lower revenue due to lower airframe and fleet management activities.

The group reported an earnings per share of 24 Singapore cents versus 32.9 cents a year ago.

StarHub

StarHub is slashing its dividends for 2019, while earnings for last year fell below forecasts.

The telco is switching from a fixed to a variable dividend policy from this year, and will distribute at least 80 per cent of net profit each year. It intends to pay a quarterly cash dividend of at least 2.25 Singapore cents per share for the 2019 financial year, down from four cents per quarter in 2018.

StarHub posted a net profit of \$19.8 million in the fourth quarter, down 61.8 per cent from the same period a year earlier. Total revenue for the three months ended Dec 31 fell 9.8 per cent or \$67.4 million to \$620 million as mobile revenue fell 13.7 per cent or \$30.8 million to \$194 million. This was due to lower IDD, voice and data usage revenue, lower subscription revenue due to higher phone subsidies given to customers, and a higher mix of SIM-Only plans.

Total revenue for 2018 dipped 2 per cent to \$2.36 billion, while net profit for the full year fell 26.2 per cent to \$201.5 million. Net asset value per share was 31.9 Singapore cents at the end of last year, down from a restated 34.8 cents at the end of 2017.

UOB to launch digital bank in Thailand

TMRW's functions are also meant to strip away banking jargon and remove hidden fees. Dr Dennis Khoo, UOB's head of group retail digital, said TMRW "pushes simplicity to the limit".

Local lender United Overseas Bank (UOB) will open its digital bank in Thailand, with the aim of attracting three to five million customers in the next five years.

It will roll out the mobile-only lender in other Asean markets in the coming months.

TMRW, as the bank is known, is targeting Asean millennials who transact mainly on their phones.

The bank uses data to bring personalised functions and information to each customer, UOB said yesterday.

It said it has partnered financial technology (fintech) firms such as Personetics and Meniga to experiment and learn how to deepen customer engagement.

These fintech partnerships will be done through UOB's regional engagement labs (eLabs), said to be

the first dedicated unit set up by a bank in Asean that is focused on using technology and behavioural insights to bolster the way it interacts with clients.

UOB said one of TMRW's most popular features, based on usage data from the 1,500 customers who joined the pilot programme in Thailand, is a money management game tied to a person's savings goals.

TMRW's functions are also meant to strip away banking jargon and remove hidden fees.

Dr Dennis Khoo, UOB's head of group retail digital, said TMRW "pushes simplicity to the limit".

"While Asean is known for its diversity, there remains a set of fundamental expectations by the digital generation when it comes to digital services, such as simplicity and an engaging user experience," said Dr Khoo.

"We took the time needed to understand our millennial customers and how and why they engage with mobile apps and digital services the way they do. We then used those insights in designing TMRW for today's millennials."

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against S\$ Bid	Against S\$ Offer	Against US\$ Bid	Against US\$ Offer
Feb 14				
S\$ / US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9671	0.9681	0.7126	0.7131
Canadian dollar	10250	10257	0.7555	0.7553
Euro	15309	15319	1.1281	1.1284
NZ dollar	0.9284	0.9290	0.6841	0.6843
Sterling pound	1.7451	1.7463	1.2859	1.2863
US dollar	1.3571	1.3576	-	-
S\$ / US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	20.0556	20.0662	14.7783	14.7807
Danish kroner	20.5220	20.5327	15.1220	15.1242
Hong Kong dollar	1729	1730	12.7427	12.7431
Indian Rupee	191	191	14.100	14.102
Indonesian rupiah	0.0096	0.0097	0.0071	0.0071
Japanese yen	12218	12224	0.9003	0.9004
Korean won	0.1206	0.1206	0.0889	0.0889
Malaysian ringgit	3334	3338	24.5700	24.5881
New Taiwan dollar	4.3992	4.4051	3.2416	3.2448
Norwegian krone	15.7186	15.7299	11.5825	11.5865
Philippine peso	25919	25938	19.099	19.106
Saudi riyal	36.1845	36.2007	26.6631	26.6652
Swedish krona	14.6733	14.6850	10.8122	10.8169
Swiss franc	134.6463	134.7226	99.2162	99.2359
Thai Baht	4.3275	4.3332	3.1888	3.1918

Source: OCBC

Government securities

GOVERNMENT BONDS						
Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
Feb 14						
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	101.95	101.95	101.95
5-Year	NS19100A	2.000%	01-Feb-24	99.94	0.00	0.00
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	103.96	0.00	0.00
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	111.96	112.05	112.00
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	97.06	97.18	97.05
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	102.86	103.00	103.00

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

MSCI INDICES

Feb 13	Index	In local curr %dy	%yr Change
World Preliminary	15712	0.3	9.0
EAFE Preliminary	10821	0.6	7.4
Europe Preliminary	1510.7	0.5	7.6
Australia	1215.2	-0.4	6.5
Austria Preliminary	544.1	-0.9	9.2
Belgium Preliminary	1016.6	0.8	11.1
Canada Preliminary	1994.6	-0.1	8.9
Denmark Preliminary	8003.5	0.0	8.1
Finland Preliminary	728.6	0.9	11.6
France Preliminary	1834.3	0.4	7.0
Germany Preliminary	891.0	0.3	5.6
Greece Preliminary	46.3	0.3	6.7
India	1251.7	-0.5	-0.9
Indonesia	7208.6	-0.6	1.9
Ireland Preliminary	197.6	1.3	10.2
Israel Preliminary	252.7	-1.6	9.6
Italy Preliminary	676.2	0.9	8.7
Japan	951.0	1.1	6.5
Korea	661.5	0.5	9.5
Malaysia	584.8	-0.2	0.5
Netherlands Preliminary	1618.5	0.3	11.0
New Zealand	143.2	0.9	7.9
Norway Preliminary	2964.6	1.4	6.5
Pakistan	402.8	0.5	12.9
Philippines	1344.3	-1.2	6.5
Portugal Preliminary	85.4	-0.1	5.7
Singapore	1685.5	1.4	5.7
Singapore Free	362.4	1.4	5.7

Source: MSCI

RB Capital doing exclusive due diligence of Andaz hotel

Today in THE BUSINESS TIMES

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Nathan Yong Founder, Nathan Yong Design Singapore & the world: high-profile design collaborations

Dennis Tay Founder, Nailise and Retailer at Design Orchard 'Herocal' designs - the Singapore success story

Talk will be conducted in English & Mandarin

Co-organisers: 新加坡文创空间 SINGAPORE CREATOR AWARDS 2019

OBITUARIES

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES
1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192



KOH HOCK CHAI

Age: 74

passed away peacefully on 14 February 2019, leaving behind loved ones.

Wife: Tan Gua Eng

Sons:
Koh Chun Yong, Alan
Koh Chun Wee, Francis

Daughter:
Koh Hui Fang, Regina

Grandsons:
Koh Zhi Jie, Kenji
Jayden Wee

Brother:
Koh Hock Seng, Renny

Sisters:
Koh Geok Hong
Koh Geok Hwa

Brothers-in-law:
Tan Liong King
Tan Liong Seng (deceased)
Tan Liong San
Tan Yoon Son
Tan Liong Hai

Sisters-in-law:
Tan Guat Swee
Tan Guat Bee
Tan Guat Leng

Daughters-in-law:
Lee Wei Wei, Sophrine
Ang Suat Yen

Son-in-law:
Wee Liangshen, Shaun

Granddaughters:
Koh Li Xian, Rachel
Koh Yan Yi, Hazel
Koh Yan Rui, Hailey
Jaclyn Wee

Spouse:
Lim Leng Hong, Teresa

Spouses:
Ng Sew Ten

Ang Lih Huah
Saw Poong Ling
Adele Teo - Gomez

Spouses:
Ho Kewau Lin
Ng Soo Khim
Tay Peng Kiang

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at

113 Greenfield Drive, Singapore 457979.

Cortege will leave on 18 February 2019 (Mon)
at 10am for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2
for cremation at 11am.



MALKIT SINGH

Age: 62

Father: Late Jawand Singh Didarewala
Mother: Late Nasib Kaur

passed away peacefully on 14 Feb 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Brother:
Mohan Singh

Nephews:
Sharanpal Singh (Sharan)
Keshmahinder Singh (Kash)

Sister-in-law:
Diljit Kaur

Niece-in-law:
Dharaminder Kaur (Darvin)

and all relatives and friends.
Gone from our lives one so dear,
But in our hearts forever near.

Cortege will leave from Blk 11, St. George's Road on 15 Feb (Fri)
for Mandai Crematorium for Cremation.
Bus will leave from Central Sikh Temple.

For funeral and other details, please contact:
9827 1647 (Sharan)
8309 8402 (Kash)

5th Anniversary In Loving Memory of



NOEL EVELYN NORRIS

Departed on 15 February 2014

Dearly missed & fondly
remembered by

Class of 1978
Raffles Girls' School

In Loving Memory Of Our Dearest Parents / Grandparents



S. ACHUTHAN NAIR
Departed 15 Feb 1974



AYYAPAN NAIR AMMUKUTTY
Departed 28 May 2015

We always love & miss you

Always remembered by
Children, In-Laws, Grandchildren,
Great Grandchildren, Relatives & Friends



Nagammal d/o Kamachi

Age: 84

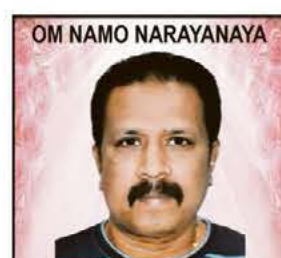
Passed away peacefully on
14 February 2019, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.

Late Husband: Rajarattanam
Sons, daughters,
daughters-in-law, sons-in-law,
grandchildren,
grandchildren-in-law,
great-grandchildren,
all relatives and friends.

Ammal is resting at Block 383A
Bukit Batok West Avenue 5,
MPH, Singapore 651383.

Cortege leaves on Friday
15 February 2019 at 3.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1
for cremation at 5.00pm.

Tel: 9002 5821 / 8328 0969



Siddharthan s/o Parimanam Pavalakantham

Passed away peacefully on
13 February 2019, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Krishnakumari (Jayanthi)

Son: Shri Viknesh Ram

Daughter: Shalini Priya

Father: P.P. Kantham (deceased)

Mother: Saroja Devi Naidu

Brother: Sampath and Family

Father-in-law:
Veeragoo Suppiah Naidu (deceased)

Mother-in-law:
Ratha Rukmani Bai

Brothers-in-law:
S. Veeragoo Naidu and Family

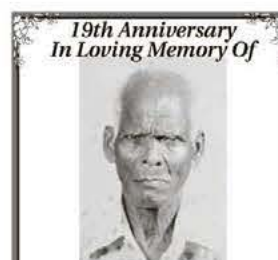
S. Guruswamy Naidu and Family

And all relatives and friends.

Bavah is resting at Block 530
Choa Chu Kang Street 51,
#11-329, Singapore 680530.

Cortege leaves on Friday
15 February 2019 at 5.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4
for cremation at 6.30pm.

Tel: 9749 4084 / 9731 4219



NARAYANAN S/O MUTHU THEVAR

Departed 15 Feb 2000
Always remembered by
all loved ones

Obituaries

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- Original Death Certificate
- Identity Card of person placing the announcement
- Details to be included in the announcement, e.g. list of family names, information on wake and funeral

Payment:

Cash, credit card, NETS or cheque

No cash payment for bookings

on weekdays after 5.30pm and on weekends.

Enquiries

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ST Classifieds



Raj Kumar s/o Karunakaran

Age: 47

Passed away peacefully on
13 February 2019, dearly missed
and remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Yeckeswari A.K.

Mother: M. Sarasavalli

Mother-in-law: Annupoonan A.K.

Late Father-in-law: Ananda Krishnan

Brother: K. Suresh Kumar

Sister-in-law: Sheryl Nair

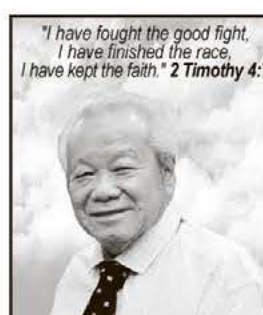
And all relatives and friends.

Body is resting at Block 165

Bukit Batok West Avenue 8 #05-286,

Singapore 650165. Tel: 8590 0136

Cortege leaves on Friday
15 February 2019 at 4.30pm
for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1
for cremation at 6.30pm.



Richard Chang Yoke Hong

Age: 83

Entered God's rest
on 13 February 2019.

Loved by:

Wife: Susie Lam

Sons & Daughter-in-law:

Paul Chang

Roy Chang & Chew Ailin

Grandchildren:

Chang Yi Kai, Chang Yi Xuan,

Chang Yi En, Chang Yi Yan

& Chang Yi Han

Siblings and many loved ones

Wake is held at 31 Sunrise Lane,

Singapore 806489 from Saturday

16 February 2019, 6.00pm onwards.

Night services on Saturday

and Sunday at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Monday

18 February 2019 at 10.40am

for Mandai Crematorium Hall 2

for service at 11.40am.



In memory of
a loved one



In memory of
a loved one



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SPORT

IAAF DENIES IT PLANS TO CLASSIFY CASTER SEMENYA AS A BIOLOGICAL MALE C7

LIN DAN'S S'PORE OPEN DATE

Other former Olympic champions pencilled in for April event include Chen Long, Li Xuerui

David Lee

Lin Dan may have more than revenge in mind as he heads to badminton's Singapore Open from April 9-14 as part of a Chinese team of 35. The two-time Olympic champion and five-time world champion was beaten by Loh Kean Yew in the Thailand Masters men's singles final last month, and a rematch could be on as the Singaporean is also in the running to make the main draw.

"Super Dan" has proven a divisive figure in previous visits here, thrilling the crowd with his ferocious attacking play but angering fans when he conceded the final to teammate Chen Jin in 2011, citing a stomach ailment. While he did not address a potential rematch with Loh, the world No. 12 said: "I have registered for quite a number of tournaments this year including the Singapore Open. I'm hoping to earn as many points as possible, to improve my ranking.

I hope to get mentally prepared before the Olympic qualification commences (in May)." Lin, 35, will not be the only Olympic champion and former world No. 1 set to light up the BWF World Tour Super 500 event at the Singapore Indoor Stadium. World No. 4 Chen Long, the reigning Olympic men's champion, will be looking to end his Singapore hoodoo. His best finish in three visits was the quarter-finals in 2016. Women's world No. 22 Li Xuerui, the 2012 Olympic women's champion, is on the comeback trail after a serious knee injury in 2016. Li, runner-up in Singapore in 2013 and 2014, said: "It's been a

long time since I competed in Singapore. Qualifying for the Olympics is my target. I'm building up my stamina and pace, getting ready for the upcoming tournaments when the qualifying period starts." Other big names who have confirmed their entry include 2016 champion Ratchanok Intanon from Thailand and 2012 Olympic bronze medallist Saina Nehwal from India. Malaysia's 2016 Olympic silver medallists - mixed doubles pair Goh Liu Ying and Chan Peng Soon and men's doubles combination of Goh V Shem and Tan Wee Kiong - are also registered for the event. Indonesia has also lined up a number of Singapore Open winners, in-

cluding reigning men's doubles champions Hendra Setiawan and Mohammad Ahsan, 2015 men's doubles champions Ricky Karanda Suwardi and Angga Pratama, and 2013 winner Tommy Sugiarto. The entry deadline is Feb 26. Loh said: "It's great that the Singapore Open is attracting so many big names. It will be good exposure for us local players. It is up to us to fight and make it to the main draw and I'm looking forward to a good run."

davidlee@sph.com.sg

• Tickets available via Sports Hub Tix and APAC Tix. Early-bird ticket sales end Feb 28

EXPOSURE FOR LOCAL PLAYERS

It's great that the Singapore Open is attracting so many big names. It will be good exposure for us local players.

LOH KEAN YEW

Singaporean shuttler, looking forward to April's Singapore Open.

Lin Dan, part of a 35-strong Chinese team, could face Singapore's Loh Kean Yew again. The Singaporean stunned the Chinese legend in the Thailand Masters final last month. ST FILE PHOTO



Netball Super League sides must field two U-21 players

Mission Mannas defender Shina Teo attempting a block during the M1 Netball Super League final loss to Blaze Dolphins last year. The new season begins tomorrow with an emphasis on youth development. ST FILE PHOTO



Laura Chia

The Under-21 players are set for a prominent role in the M1 Netball Super League (NSL) this year. In its latest bid to boost youth development in clubs, Netball Singapore (NS) has made it mandatory for all six teams to feature two U-21 players for at least two quarters in every game. NS is also putting its money where its mouth is. Every club - except the Mission Mannas, who are an NS selection team - will get \$2,000 per youth player, up to two players under the Elite Club Scheme. The NSL, which begins tomorrow at Our Tampines Hub, will involve champions Blaze Dolphins, Sneakers Stingrays, Magic Marlins, Swifts Barracudas, Llabten Narwhals and Mission Mannas. Said NS chief executive officer Cyrus Medora: "We used to put the youth players in one team for the NSL but we didn't really see them improving and they didn't get to learn from their seniors. "When we put them in each club, they were left on the bench and didn't get to play big matches. "With this new arrangement, the experienced seniors will be pushing them and they can improve themselves. If they play in the same team, there's no one to push them." The change, he explained, will push clubs to scout for young play-

ers "instead of waiting for them". He added: "This way, they also get renewal and with new players, they get stronger. "All the clubs agreed to do it." Stingrays coach Goh Seck Tuck said that clubs and players will benefit overall. He said: "If it works well, in the next three years, most teams will have 60 per cent young players. "This indirectly revamps the whole game as the youngsters get to come out on court earlier and clubs get renewal." Huang Po Chin, coach of new NSL side Narwhals who have four youth players this year, highlighted the guidance role of senior players. "It's a great opportunity (for the seniors) to impart knowledge and skills to the younger ones. Their role is to bring their experience to the game and learn to adapt to the youth players. "They will be able to lead the juniors from training all the way to the competition. It will be great for them to show their leadership."

While she admitted that coaches will have more to do now, she is focused on the positives. "Usually it's about playing your best combination but because of this (programme), coaches must strategise. You must think about how the youth players will fit in and tweak accordingly. So the coaches also grow. This programme is positive for all involved." National U-21 player Yew Shu Ning, who is making her debut with Dolphins, said it would be a beneficial experience although she was initially nervous when playing alongside veterans like former Singapore captain Micky Lin. Said the 20-year-old: "The seniors are very willing to teach and I've learnt a lot through our training sessions. Micky will teach me what to do on court, like if I encounter a tall shooter. "If I have queries, I will ask and they will give me opinions based on their experiences."

claura@sph.com.sg

\$2,000

Amount NSL clubs (except Mission Mannas) will get for each U-21 players, up to two players, fielded this season



Tottenham forward Son Heung-min scoring the opening goal past Borussia Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Bürki during the first leg of their Champions League last-16 match at Wembley Stadium on Wednesday. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Jan Vertonghen doing the “Superman” celebration, by pretending to tear open his shirt, after scoring his team’s second goal. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

PROUD POCH PRAISES PLAYERS AS HEROES

Dortmund dominate early but Spurs secure commanding lead ahead of away leg

16

Tottenham’s Son Heung-min has been directly involved in 16 goals in his last 12 matches in all competitions (11 goals, 5 assists).

LONDON • When Jan Vertonghen scored against Borussia Dortmund, he ran to the home crowd and did the “Superman” celebration – pretending to tear open his shirt.

His manager Mauricio Pochettino duly saluted him and his Tottenham teammates as heroes after the 3-0 Champions League last-16, first-leg win as they took a huge step towards reaching the quarter-finals for the first time since 2011.

Spurs had been under pressure as Dortmund dominated the first half but were sparked into life by a fine finish from forward Son Heung-min after the interval.

Defender Vertonghen capped his own powerful performance when

he scored late, and substitute striker Fernando Llorente’s goal put the seal on a remarkable result that had the Wembley crowd rise to their feet in a loud, emotional salute.

Insisting his players deserved all the praise after emerging from a gruelling schedule, Pochettino said: “It was a fantastic game, a massive effort. My players are heroes. They deserve a lot of praise for the effort they are doing this season.

“Sonny was fantastic again. He translates good energy and his performance in every game is improving. We’re so happy.

“3-0 is a very good result, but we must go to Dortmund (on March 5) with the idea of winning. There is a lot of work to do.”

It was an impressive success for Pochettino given he was without the injured Harry Kane, Dele Alli, Danny Rose and Ben Davies.

Credit has to be given to the Argentinian’s managerial alchemy, inspiring his men at half-time, encouraging them to go for the jugular.

He also got them to get closer to Jadon Sancho, subduing the English midfielder in the second period.

The Londoner Sancho, blessed with so much pace, balance and remarkably mature decision-making for an 18-year-old, was on the right, having to deal with Vertonghen’s ventures from wingback. But he was always quick to attack, whipping in a couple of threatening crosses.

Christian Pulisic was over on the left, stretching Spurs, causing Serge Aurier problems. Chelsea fans would have been impressed by the burst of speed and direct running of the American, who will play for them next season. In one such sudden break, Aurier could stop him only by grabbing his shorts and was

deservedly cautioned.

Not until the second half did Spurs show real adventure, more energy and precision.

So many good individual displays spiced Spurs’ second-half performance. Centre-back Vertonghen, played out of position to good effect, was immense at left wingback, playmaker Christian Eriksen started to grow into the game and the key man was Son.

This was his fourth goal in successive games and it came as a welcome riposte after all the pressure that Spurs had endured from the lively Sancho in the first half.

One moment the South Korean was chatting to Dortmund captain Mario Gotze as the teams prepared to restart, and the next he was scoring.

With the goal, Spurs were almost unrecognisable from the first half.

They looked like far more intelligent, incisive, heavyweight European campaigners. And Son’s excellence continued with good passes and then running shrewdly into space for Eriksen to pick out.

“The first half was very difficult. We didn’t feel the confidence to play,” said Pochettino.

“At half-time, we showed them a few situations that could have been different. We tried to help the team make the right decisions and perform in the best way.

“Maybe today everyone will say it was a fantastic decision. If it was a different result, people might say I’m the worst coach in the world.”

THE TIMES, LONDON, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS



Solari believes in VAR as Real claim slim win at Ajax

AMSTERDAM • Real Madrid coach Santiago Solari has urged managers to trust in the video assistant referee after his team benefited from a controversial VAR decision at Ajax Amsterdam on Wednesday.

The VAR was used by referee Damir Skomina in the 38th minute to rule out a goal for the first time in the Champions League in the first leg of the last-16 tie which Real won 2-1.

Ajax’s Dusan Tadic was shown to be offside on replays and deemed to be interfering with goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois, who spilled a

header and allowed Nicolas Tagliafico to head in the rebound.

Said Solari: “We don’t have the elements to make a judgment. We don’t have a monitor. We (have to) trust what VAR or the referees say.

“We had to do a lot right to get the win – work hard, persevere, create chances, deal with the pressure and score goals.”

Karim Benzema scored for Real on the hour before Hakim Ziyech levelled in the 75th minute. Marco Asensio then came off the bench to net the winner.

European football’s governing

body Uefa later explained that the goal was correctly overturned.

“The referee identified that Tagliafico’s teammate Tadic was in an offside position and interfering with the goalkeeper – preventing him from playing or being able to play the ball – as the header was being made,” it said on Twitter. “The goal was correctly overturned and a free kick given for offside.”

The VAR system, used during last year’s World Cup, and now called upon in most of Europe’s leading leagues, is making its debut in the continent’s top club competition in

this season’s knockout stages.

Ajax midfielder Frenkie de Jong suggested that the decision was not justified, saying: “As a team we did well, it was too bad that our goal is rejected. Perhaps something like that is easy to do in favour of the big club.”

Meanwhile, Real captain Sergio Ramos has backtracked on his suggestion that he deliberately earned a yellow card to ensure he would be banned for the second leg and, as a result, be available for a possible quarter-final.

“The truth is that given the result I’d be lying if I said it wasn’t something I had in mind,” the Spaniard said after the game. “Sometimes there is a time to make decisions and I have done so.”

Around an hour later, he wrote on Twitter: “I want to make clear that it hurts me more than anyone. I have not forced the card.”

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Klopp could miss United clash with touchline ban

LONDON • Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp could miss the crucial Premier League clash at Manchester United on Feb 24.

The German is facing a touchline ban or a fine after being charged by the Football Association (FA) for comments he made about referee Kevin Friend after his side’s league match at West Ham on Feb 4.

Klopp intimated after the 1-1 draw that Friend’s second-half per-

formance had been affected by an assistant referee’s mistake for Sadio Mane’s opening goal.

Mane’s goal stood at the London Stadium despite James Milner being clearly offside in the build-up before Michail Antonio’s equaliser cost Liverpool two points in the title race.

Klopp said after the game: “As a human being, if I know I have made a big mistake in the first half, I don’t

want to open the gap any more.

“Referees are obviously human beings, and I understand that, but I didn’t during the game because I had no clue that our goal was offside.”

The FA confirmed in a statement that Klopp had been charged for “questioning the integrity” of the match official and he has until 6pm on Monday to respond.

It said: “It is alleged that com-

ments he made in a post-match interview following Liverpool’s league game against West Ham United on Feb 4, 2019, breached Rule E3(1) as they questioned the integrity of the match referee and/or implied bias.”

Liverpool are second in the Premier League behind Manchester City on goal difference, and with a game in hand.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

LOTTERY

TOTO

Thu, 14 Feb 2019 Draw No. 3449/2019

Group 1 Prize \$1,386,522

Winning Numbers

02 10 12 20 24 32 31

Prize Group

Share Amount

No. of Winning Shares

Group 1

\$693,261

2

Group 2

\$97,300

3

Group 3

\$917

219

Group 4

\$334

328

Group 5

\$50

9,825

Group 6

\$25

9,854

Group 7

\$10

152,672

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Group 1 Prize

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Sat, 16 Feb 2019

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Augsburg

Bayern Munich

3.30am

LW*

Italian League

Juventus

Frosinone

3.30am

LW*

English Cup

QPR

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3.45am

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LW*

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ATHLETES URGED TO JOIN NEW LOBBY

Global Athlete will stand for their rights, give them a voice, says Olympic champ Skinner

LONDON • British Olympic gold-winning cyclist Callum Skinner has urged fellow athletes to sign up for a new global body that he says will stand up for their rights – and ensure they are not treated with “disdain” by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada).

Skinner, one of the key figures behind Global Athlete, which plans to be an “athlete-led movement for change” in Olympic and Paralympic sports, said that it was absurd that competitors did not currently have more of a voice in deciding how their sports are run.

The new organisation has been launched after growing concerns about athlete welfare following the US gymnastics sex abuse scandal and also historic reports of bullying in various British Olympic and Paralympic sports, as well as concerns that the IOC and Wada have brushed the Russian doping crisis under the carpet.

Skinner, a member of Britain’s team pursuit Olympic gold-winning trio in 2016, said he had got involved after realising that sending “disgruntled tweets” were not go-

ing to bring about change.

“This was born out of a dissatisfaction with the way Wada lifted the suspension on the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (Rusada) but it is clear there are also a whole bunch of issues where things for athletes could be better, including their welfare,” he told The Guardian.

He was especially critical of Wada president Craig Reedie, his director general, Olivier Niggli, and IOC president Thomas Bach, calling their leadership over the doping scandal “ineffectual”.

He said: “They have been blowing their horn, saying it’s a massive victory for clean sport but it’s not really when you have alienated hundreds of athletes on the way.”

“But away from the Rusada case, the main issue is we find disdain for the athlete voice. Ultimately no one knows sport better than the athletes, so it seems crazy to me that you would exclude that voice from any decision-making table or fail to engage in basic dialogue.”

He hoped that Global Athlete would attract as many athletes from as many countries as possible to give them as much power as possible.

Global Athlete said it will focus on issues such as “better athlete welfare, tackling harassment, ensuring that athletes receive some Olympic revenues or prize money, a more robust anti-doping system or better representation”.

It will be led by Rob Koehler, who was the deputy director of Wada before he resigned last year.

He plans to conduct a “listening exercise” among athletes over the next few months.

“We are taking a bottom-up approach and speaking to the athletes to find where the biggest pressure points are and what their concerns are,” Koehler said.

It is funded by FairSport, a not-for-profit independent organisation dedicated to eradicating cheating, as well as some private individuals. But he promised that anyone putting money in it would have no say over how it was run.

“Funding is not, and will never be linked to decision-making,” he said.

“This is an organisation that will be solely driven by the athletes. We are here to support them and give them a voice in the long term.”

THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS



ATHLETE-LED MOVEMENT

They have been blowing their horn, saying it’s a massive victory for clean sport but it’s not really when you have alienated hundreds of athletes on the way.



CALLUM SKINNER, British Olympic gold-winning cyclist, criticising the IOC and Wada’s leadership over the Russian doping scandal.



British Formula One driver Lewis Hamilton getting his first taste of the new Mercedes car at Silverstone on Wednesday. The 34-year-old is aiming to win his sixth world title this season. PHOTO: MERCEDES/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

2018 was great but 2019 can be better, warns Hamilton

LONDON • Lewis Hamilton has delivered an ominous warning to his Formula One rivals by vowing to improve on last year’s almost flawless championship-winning campaign.

The British driver emerged from his winter hibernation at Silverstone on Wednesday to get his first taste of the Mercedes car that he hopes will fire him to a sixth world title.

He won 11 of the 21 races last season to beat Ferrari’s Sebastian Vettel and secure his fifth championship with two rounds to spare.

As he enters the first campaign of the new two-year deal that will earn him £40 million (\$570 million) a season, a fully refreshed Hamilton said he is ready to extend his dominance of the sport.

“2018 was a great year, but I feel like 2019 can be even better,” the 34-year-old said.

“I want to achieve more, I want to continue to keep pushing. I feel en-

ergised and I am ready to attack.”

Hamilton is entering the 13th season of his remarkable career, and will move to within just one title of Michael Schumacher’s record haul of seven should he triumph again this term.

The Briton added that he had switched off from racing in the off-season to recharge his batteries and also aims to make his reach felt beyond the sport.

“I have this great platform and I

want to achieve more, but there is a much, much bigger picture to what I am involved in, and what I and my family represent,” he said.

“What is driving me right now is to continue to push for diversity and change, not only in my sport, but also in the world, encouraging young people to dream big and really putting it out there.”

Only Kimi Raikkonen, 39, and Robert Kubica, 35 this year, are older than Hamilton but he insists

he does not feel like a veteran.

“I still feel young, I still feel fit, I feel strong and I have still got it,” he said. “If you look at fire, it is a beautiful thing. You see the flame is constantly shifting, and that is the same in my heart every single year.”

Ahead of chasing a sixth consecutive constructors’ title, Mercedes team principal Toto Wolff said: “When we met after the winter break, Lewis was refreshed.

“He’s extremely hungry and

wants to start racing again.”

Technical director James Allison added that the team had worked hard on the suspension and aerodynamics to deliver a car that would be kinder to its tyres than last year and remain competitive at every track on the calendar.

Pre-season testing gets under way in Barcelona on Monday before Hamilton starts his title defence in Melbourne on March 17.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

Garcia ashamed and sorry for Saudi tantrum

LOS ANGELES • Sergio Garcia on Wednesday apologised for his spectacular meltdown at the Saudi Arabia International two weeks ago, blaming his tantrum for “emotional, personal news” that he had received earlier in the week.

The Spaniard was thrown out of the tournament after damaging several putting greens in frustration and caught on camera wildly attacking a bunker after a poor shot at the Royal Greens course.

Speaking ahead of this week’s Genesis Open in Los Angeles, the 2017 Masters champion admitted his behaviour was inexcusable.

“I received some very emotional, personal news earlier that week that didn’t help,” he told The Golf Channel. “It was in the back of my mind. As I became frustrated on the course, everything erupted.

“It’s obviously something I feel ashamed of. I’m sorry to my fans and fellow competitors. What happened is not an example I want to set, and it’s not who I truly am.”

He did not divulge details of the news, saying only it was a mix of “some emotional and personal things going on and a little frustration with the greens”.

He was kicked out of the European Tour event after reigning Masters champion Patrick Reed and other players complained Garcia had damaged six greens.

The Spaniard said he had snapped out of his rage during the round. He reportedly apologised to Reed and others following his expulsion.

“It hit me like on the 10th hole. I started thinking, ‘What am I doing? Get your head back on top of your shoulders,’” he said.

“I know I lost it. I feel terrible about it. I’ve been thinking about it for the last week, every day.

“I’m an emotional player. If I channel it the right way, it’s amazing. If I channel it the wrong way, it’s too extreme.”

Garcia added that he had no issue with world No. 2 Brooks Koepka, who said Garcia acted like a child, adding: “You’re 40, so you’ve got to grow up.”

The duo are due to play next week at the World Golf Championship in Mexico City.

“I’m going to tell him I agree,” Garcia said.

“But I don’t agree with the age. I’m 39, not 40. But when I see him, I’ll tell him I’m sorry.”

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, REUTERS

SportsWorld

Harrison, youth coach of United’s ‘Class of 92’ dies

LONDON • Eric Harrison, the man who coached Manchester United’s famous “Class of 92” has died at the age of 81, the Premier League club said yesterday.

Former United boss Alex Ferguson led the tributes to Harrison, who was diagnosed with dementia four years ago, describing his contribution to football in general as “incredible”. David Beckham, Ryan Giggs, Paul Scholes, Gary and Phil Neville, and Nicky Butt also wrote their tributes via Instagram. DPA

Injured Sharapova pulls out of Indian Wells

LOS ANGELES • Maria Sharapova has withdrawn from next month’s WTA Indian Wells Open in California after failing

to overcome a right shoulder injury, organisers said on Wednesday.

The injury also forced the Russian tennis star, 31, to pull out of a St Petersburg event last month. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Free Community Shield tickets up for grabs

A limited number of complimentary tickets to the Feb 23 Community Shield match between Singapore Premier League champions Albirex Niigata and Home United at Jalan Besar Stadium are now available.

Each individual can apply for up to four tickets at

www.fas.org.sg/tickets. The tickets will be allocated on a first-come-first-served basis.

There will also be a host of fringe activities for fans at the stadium from 3pm before kick-off at 6pm.

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SPORT

IAAF SAYS NO PLANS TO CLASS CASTER AS MALE

But world athletics body wants CAS to direct such athletes to lower testosterone levels

LONDON • The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) has emphatically rejected a report that it wants the women's Olympic 800m champion, Caster Semenya, to be classified as a biological male when her landmark case is heard next week.

Track and field's governing body told The Guardian that it was not classifying any athletes with differences in sexual development (DSDs) as male, "accepted their legal sex without question" and would allow all of them to continue

to compete in the female category.

However, it wants the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS), to rule that DSD athletes such as Semenya, who was reportedly born with testes, must have their testosterone reduced to female levels before they compete internationally in order to ensure fairness with other women.

Explaining its position, the IAAF said: "If a DSD athlete has testes and male levels of testosterone, they get the same increases in bone and muscle size and strength and in-



Olympic champion Caster Semenya has been unbeatable over the 800m distance since 2015.

creases in haemoglobin that a male gets when they go through puberty, which is what gives men such a performance advantage over women.

"Therefore, to preserve fair competition in the female category, it is necessary to require DSD athletes to reduce their testosterone down to female levels before they compete at international level."

The IAAF's lawyer, Jonathan Tay-

lor, told The Guardian that the initial story was a mischaracterisation of its case. "The IAAF has not said that DSD athletes should be classified as male," he said.

"That is what Caster Semenya's lawyers say our case is, because they think that will help them before the Court of Arbitration for Sport, but that is not our case."

Semenya has been unbeatable over the distance ever since the CAS decided to change the rules in 2015 to allow inter-sex athletes to compete without taking testosterone-suppressing medication.

However, last year the IAAF produced scientific evidence that suggested testosterone makes a big difference in events ranging from

400m to a mile.

That evidence has since been called into question, while Semenya's supporters also believe that asking her to take such medication infringes on her rights.

Last year, the United Nations' human rights special procedures body urged the IAAF to drop the regulations, claiming they contravene international human rights.

Some women athletes also feel they are at a massive disadvantage racing against DSDs.

The 2016 Olympic 800m final was won by Semenya while the silver and bronze medallists, Francine Niyonsaba of Burundi and Margaret Wambui of Kenya, have also faced questions about their testosterone levels.

Earlier that year, Britain's Lynsey Sharp, who finished sixth in the final, said: "Everyone can see that it's two separate races so there is nothing I can do."

If the CAS rules in favour of the IAAF, Semenya and other DSD athletes will have to reduce and keep their testosterone levels to no greater than 5nmol/L for six months prior to competing internationally in events ranging from 400m to a mile.

THE GUARDIAN, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

TEST CASE ON TESTOSTERONE

If a DSD athlete has testes and male levels of testosterone, they get the same increases in bone and muscle size and strength and increases in haemoglobin that a male gets when they go through puberty, which is what gives men such a performance advantage over women.



THE IAAF, on why it feels inter-sex athletes like Caster Semenya should be required to reduce their testosterone levels before competing internationally



Toronto Raptors forward Pascal Siakam driving to the basket as Washington Wizards guard Bradley Beal attempts to steal the ball during their National Basketball Association match at the Scotiabank Arena on Wednesday. Siakam scored a career-high 44 points in the Raptors' 129-120 win. PHOTO: REUTERS

Siakam goes wild as Raptors down Wizards

TORONTO • It is hard to miss Toronto Raptors forward Pascal Siakam on the court.

Known for wearing a rainbow of colours on his game-day shoes, he opted for a turquoise pair on Wednesday night that could be seen from the seats of Scotiabank Arena. Still, the Washington Wizards could not track him.

They lost the 2m forward in transition, they lost him at the three-point arc, they lost him under the basket in a 129-120 National Basket-

ball Association win for the Raptors that had home fans chanting "M-V-P" (Most Valuable Player) as he shot a pair of free throws in the final minute.

By that point, after Siakam posted a career-high 44 points to go with 10 rebounds, it would have been difficult for the Wizards to disagree. He made 15 of 25 shots, the most attempts of any player on the floor, and made four of his five three-point attempts.

"He pretty much got whatever he

wanted," Wizards guard Bradley Beal said. "He was making some threes early, which is not really his game, but he got to the basket a lot. Got to the free-throw line. He was just being aggressive."

Although Beal (28 points), Jeff Green (23) and Jabari Parker (22) formed a strong offensive trio, Washington (24-34) will enter the All-Star break with regrets after another shaky defensive showing.

Toronto's 16 three-pointers powered their comeback from a

12-point deficit. Besides Siakam, OG Anunoby (22 points) and Kyle Lowry (14) each made four three-pointers for the Raptors (43-16).

One month earlier, the teams met in Washington for an entertaining match that saw Beal score 43 for his second career triple-double. Kawhi Leonard shined as well in that game, scoring 41 in Toronto's 140-138 double-overtime win.

Much has changed in the past 30 days. The NBA trade deadline and buyout market rearranged both ros-

ters. Leonard sat out Wednesday's game with a sore left knee and five players who were on different teams during that January meeting appeared on the court for early rotation minutes.

The Raptors used an eight-man rotation, including new arrival Jeremy Lin, who had a light walk-through with his teammates.

But the drama from a month ago lived on. Only this time, Siakam was the breakout star.

WASHINGTON POST

Walton's Lakers job safe for the season

LOS ANGELES • Luke Walton will "definitely" finish the season as Los Angeles Lakers head coach, a source close to the situation told the Los Angeles Times.

His status has been a topic of discussion among fans and media as the Lakers have slid to 28-29 in an injury-plagued National Basketball Association season.

But the Times on Wednesday cited sources saying Lakers owner Jeanie Buss, president of basketball operations Magic Johnson and general manager Rob Pelinka agree that Walton should coach for the rest of the season.

The sources are not authorised to speak publicly on the matter.

"Nothing is going to happen with Luke," said one source. "There hasn't even been any talk about it and there won't be any talks about it."

"Luke will definitely finish the season and he has the full support. So any talk in the media or on social media can be put to bed."

Walton is in his third season with the team, finishing 26-56 in 2016-17 and 35-47 in 2017-18 with young rosters.

The addition of superstar LeBron James in the off-season raised expectations, but injuries to the forward, point guards Rajon Rondo and Lonzo Ball among others, have knocked the 10th-placed Lakers outside the play-off picture with 25 games to go.

ESPN reported in late January that James' camp would prefer a coaching change.

Recent results – such as a 136-94 loss at Indiana on Feb 5, a 23-point loss, 143-120, at Philadelphia on Sunday and Tuesday's 117-113 setback at Atlanta – have increased speculation about Walton's leadership.

James did not look "totally engaged" against Atlanta despite posting a triple-double of 28 points, 16 assists and 11 rebounds, while another source claimed the team had "bad body language".

Walton has a five-year contract with a base salary of US\$5 million (S\$6.8 million) per year, with four of the years guaranteed.

"Everyone believes in Luke," one person told the Times.

"Now it's about him getting the best out of the team." REUTERS

Next 48 Hours

TODAY

BASKETBALL

ABL Zhuhai Wolf Warriors v Alab Pilipinas (StarHub Ch202, 8pm).

FOOTBALL

English FA Cup 5th rd: QPR v Watford (Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am). Spanish LaLiga Eibar v Getafe

(StarHub Ch213, tomorrow, 3.55am).

GOLF

LPGA Tour Women's Australian Open Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 10am). European Tour World Super 6 Perth Day 2 (StarHub Ch204, 1pm).

TENNIS

ATP Rotterdam Open Day 5, q-finals (StarHub Ch201, 7.30pm & tomorrow, 2.30am).

TOMORROW

BASKETBALL

ABL CLS Knights Indonesia v Mono

Vampire (8pm) – StarHub Ch202

FOOTBALL

English FA Cup 5th rd: Brighton v Millwall (8.20pm), Wimbledon v Man City (10.50pm), Newport v Ch111 (Sunday, 1.20am) – Singtel TV Ch111 Spanish LaLiga Celta v Levante (7.55pm), Rayo v Atletico (11.10pm),

Sociudad v Leganes (Sunday, 1.25am), Barcelona v Valladolid (Sunday, 3.40am) – StarHub Ch213

GOLF

LPGA Tour Women's Australian Open Day 3 (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 10am). European Tour World Super 6 Perth Day 3 (StarHub Ch204, 1pm).

TENNIS

ATP Rotterdam Open Day 6, s-finals (StarHub Ch201, 10pm & Sunday, 2.30am).

For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg & starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.

life

D **WATCH LEGEND**
JEAN-CLAUDE BIVER
Building people
and brands
D2

From the fragrance of teh-o-peng to the wafts of wok hei aroma, Singapore's Hawker Culture is a wonderful component of our Singaporean identity, one that I will always be proud of and thankful for.

Lisa Tang, 24

Pledge your support for
Singapore's Hawker Culture at
www.oursgheritage.sg



TRESS RELIEF

Hair is not called
crowning glory
for nothing.
PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO



More people are seeking help for hair loss, which may be treated with oral medication, low-level laser light therapy and hair transplants



Melissa Heng

Losing one's hair can be a huge blow to the self-esteem so it is no wonder that more people are now reaching out to hair restoration specialists to fix receding hairlines and thinning crowns.

Four clinics that The Straits Times spoke to which offer hair transplants and regenerative treatments say their clients have increased by about 10 per cent annually in the last three years.

These are usually men who are between the ages of 30 and 45 and who have some form of hair loss.

Ms Fazilah Iqbal, hair restoration specialist nurse at Terra Medical Clinic, says the increase is mainly due to a rise in awareness.

"More people are becoming aware that there are credible, scientific and clinically proven treatments available here, performed by doctors in MOH-registered clinics."

Dr Joshua Chong, medical director at Terra Medical Clinic, says people seek treatment for various reasons.

"They care about their image and their hair loss makes them self-conscious. Some come because they are getting married soon. Some women also come because they are facing post-natal hair loss."

He adds that though stress and diet may play a part, most hair loss is due to genetics.

And though more men tend to experience balding, more women are also seeking treatment.

Doctors and specialists from the four clinics and hair centres told The Straits Times say they have seen about 10 to 25 per cent more women going in for hair regeneration procedures in the last three years.

Marketing executive Ruth Lim, 31, has been going to hair centre Svenson at least once a week for the last eight months to treat her oily scalp and thinning hair.

Each session takes about an hour and includes cleansing the hair, a head massage, a hair mask, and application of serums to help make the scalp less oily.

The process also includes low-level laser therapy. This is a non-invasive light therapy that kills scalp bacteria and stimulates hair

follicles to promote hair growth.

"I started treatments for only my oily scalp, but when I noticed that that was working, I also started the laser therapy to help my thinning hair."

The bachelorette says she has been dealing with hair and scalp problems for almost a decade and has tried all sorts of shampoos and home remedies to no avail.

So when things got worse about a year ago, she decided to seek professional help.

"My hair parting was getting visibly wider and my hair was getting thinner. My scalp also became oily faster and, by the afternoon, my hair would look oily and would even smell. I felt very self-conscious and it definitely affected my confidence."

She pays about \$200 a session and though it is a hassle to go for these treatments every week, she says the cost and the inconvenience are worth it.

"I can see that my hair is improving and that has really taken a weight off my shoulders. Hair is something people notice right away and especially for women, it's so important."

For those facing hair loss like Ms Lim, there are a few solutions. These include oral medication, low-level laser light therapy and hair transplants – where healthy hair follicles are transplanted onto bald areas.

One of the newer treatments on the market is called Regenera Activa, a treatment to help thicken and strengthen thinning hair.

Though it has been available in Europe for a few years, it was brought to Singapore only last year and is available at clinics such as Terra Medical Clinic and Freia Medical.

The process involves extracting regenerative cells from the scalp and dividing them into smaller, more absorbable portions called micrografts.

These are then injected into areas of the scalp with hair strands which are weaker and have a thinner appearance. The micrografts will help strengthen the follicles.

Dr Chong says that the effects can be seen as quickly as two weeks and its effectiveness in stopping hair loss can last as long as three years.

The procedure takes about half an hour and costs about \$3,800. But hair treatments and transplants do come with some risks.

Terra Medical Clinic says that Regenera Activa and hair transplants are still minor surgeries so there is risk of infection, swelling and slight discomfort. It advises patients to keep their plasters or bandages on for 24 hours after the procedure.

Dr Chong and Ms Iqbal agree that results also vary between patients. They say that some respond well to the procedure while some do not achieve as great results.

Dr Harold Ma, medical director of



Freia Medical, adds that hair forms a big part of one's image.

"One can gain weight, add a few wrinkles and still look good, but hair loss affects everyone universally."

"Due to social media, taking selfies and photos are a big part of our lives. Naturally, more people place greater emphasis on their appearances and hair is a very important aspect."

For Ms W. Chan, who declines to reveal her first name, losing her hair was frustrating.

"I had bald patches and I didn't know what to do. I tried salon treatments and home remedies, but nothing helped."

The 44-year-old who works in the media industry had been battling hair loss for three years before she sought medical help.

She now takes prescribed medication and goes for regular scalp cleansing treatments that have helped her hair to grow.

"As much as people say that they don't judge, first impressions do matter and when you have more hair, you feel better presenting yourself to others."

EstheClinic offers a low-level laser therapy that is said to aid cell renewal in the hair follicles. PHOTO: ESTHECLINIC

Four hair loss myths

1

SHAVING YOUR HEAD WILL HELP THE HAIR GROW FASTER

Hair restoration specialist nurse Fazilah Iqbal says shaving hair off will not make it grow back thicker or cause growth to increase.

"When you shave, what is left is typically a blunt tip. So when that emerges, it may give the appearance of thicker and darker hair but it actually isn't."

She explains that the hair thickness and how pigmented it is stays the same whether you shave it or not.

2

WASHING YOUR HAIR TOO MUCH CAUSES HAIR LOSS

Dr Harold Ma, medical director of Freia Medical, says daily washing of hair will not cause hair loss and is hygienic in a humid and warm climate like Singapore.

"We should wash our hair daily, even twice daily, depending on the environment we work in or the activities we engage in."

He says the purpose of washing hair is to reduce the build up of scalp sebum, dust, smoke and pollution, which can clog the pores.

"I have encountered patients who wash their hair only once a week because of the mistaken impression that hair washing is causing their hair loss."

3

TOO MUCH SUN CAUSES BALDING

While excessive sun exposure can cause photo damage to the skin and hair, it does not lead to one becoming bald.

Dr Ma says: "Sun exposure itself does not lead to hair loss but it can cause photo damage of the hair shafts."

He says this can cause hair to become brittle and prone to breaking.

"Hence, doctors always remind patients to wear appropriate sun screen on their face and body and to wear a hat or cap if there is prolonged exposure outdoors."

4

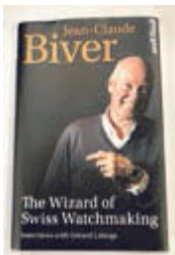
PERMING AND DYEING CAUSES HAIR LOSS

Ms Fazilah says that while going for frequent perms or putting your hair through regular colour changes might damage the hair, it does not lead to balding.

"They might not be good for the hair and might damage it but these processes won't affect the hair follicles."

So while perming may lead to thinning hair as a result of breakage along the hair shaft, Ms Fazilah says that the hair should still grow back.

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Mr Jean-Claude Biver (left) turned watch brands Blancpain, Omega and Hublot around, and also mentored top guys in the watchmaking world, including Mr Jean-Frederic Dufour of Rolex; and Mr Ricardo Guadalupe of Hublot. His career is chronicled in *The Wizard Of Swiss Watchmaking: Interviews With Gerard LeLarge* (above). ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

‘Only dead fish go with the flow’

Despite his already-illustrious career, horology trailblazer Jean-Claude Biver continues to seek to make a difference in the watchmaking industry and the lives of others

Wong Kim Hoh

Mr Jean-Claude Biver believes a person's life is useless if he does not give back.

“Life has a value only if you give to others,” says the 69-year-old, one of the living legends in the watchmaking world.

“I have given back to my family, but I also want to give back to my business. You cannot bring your knowledge, vision and experience with you when you die, so everything must be given back when you're alive. Only then would you have played a role in life,” says the voluble man who, among other achievements, rebuilt Blancpain and gave new life to Omega and Hublot.

In Singapore recently for a flying visit, he created shock waves in the industry late last year when he announced that he was giving up operational duties as president of LVMH Watch division (Hublot, Zenith and Tag Heuer).

It was a reluctant decision, one forced upon him by poor health.

“I always thought I was invincible. But my doctor told me, ‘What has happened to you is a signal. Your body has talked. If you cannot understand what your body has told you, you may have a problem in a few years. Your body may switch off,’” he says.

“I've not been the most respectful guy with my body. But my doctor has been instrumental in helping me understand that I need to slow down,” says Mr Biver, who nearly died in 1996 when he was diagnosed with Legionnaires' disease, a severe form of pneumonia.

Stepping down, however, does not mean resting on his laurels.

“My mission will be to transmit knowledge, experience, vision and success. The success you give to another person is bigger than the success you have with a brand,” says the head honcho who gave a dying Hublot – with a turnover of 25 million Swiss francs – such a wondrous kiss of life that LVMH paid almost half a billion Swiss francs for it in 2008.

Known for his ability to spot and develop talent, he has many proteges who occupy top posts in the watchmaking world. Among them are Mr Jean-Frederic Dufour, chief executive of Rolex; and Mr Ricardo Guadalupe, who steers Hublot.

“The success of Ricardo doesn't bring me money, the success of Hublot does. But what I get from the success of my people has a lot more value,” says Mr Biver.

The University of Lausanne economics graduate cut his teeth in the watchmaking world doing sales for Audemars Piguet in the 1970s before moving on to Omega.

He sealed his place in watchmaking history when he and Jacques Piguet bought Blancpain in 1981, then languishing in obscurity because of the onslaught of quartz watches.

Naysayers said they were foolhardy, but the duo resuscitated the brand with the catchphrase: “Since 1735 there has never been a quartz Blancpain watch. And there never will be.” The brand gained not just new respectability as a traditional watchmaker, but also went from zero to hero, netting a turnover of more than 55 million Swiss francs in just one decade.

In 1992, the brand was sold to SMH Group (now known as Swatch Group) for 60 million Swiss francs.

It was, says Mr Biver, a decision he regretted for some time.

“When I sold Blancpain, I felt that I sold my passion and my people. Of course, it wasn't really true because by selling to the Swatch group, our people had more job security and a better future.”

To get his passion back, he approached Swatch for a job. The late Nicolas G. Hayek, who was the group's chairman, agreed, but also wanted him to help run Omega, a brand weakened by the quartz crisis.

“I regretted selling Blancpain, but thanks to this mistake, it opened so many new doors. Selling Blancpain was the biggest emotional event, but it was also the biggest opportunity for me,” he says.

Indeed it was. Mr Biver was made international marketing director and put on Swatch's executive group management board.

The maverick more than turned the brand around with some shrewd moves, which included appointing supermodel Cindy Crawford as and turning James Bond into Omega ambassadors.

Against much tongue-wagging, he also led the charge into China.

In just 10 years, sales tripled for the brand. Both Crawford (and now her children Presley and Kaia) and Bond are still successfully selling Omega. The brand is still a favourite in China.

A few years later, he also gave Hublot a new lease of life.

With his track record, it is not hard to understand why, in 2016, Harvard Business School decided

In the river, only the dead fish swim with the current, in the direction of the current and at the speed of the current. A fish that is alive goes to the left and the right of the current, and against the current. I don't want to be a dead fish, I don't want to do what others are doing. All my life, I've always wanted to be first, different and unique.



MR JEAN-CLAUDE BIVER

to devote a two-part case study to his horological career.

Last year, a Swiss publisher also published a book, *The Wizard Of Swiss Watchmaking: Interviews With Gerard LeLarge*, chronicling his career.

A charismatic man with the gift of the gab, Mr Biver – who is also famous for making gruyere cheese on his farm in the Swiss Alps – firmly believes that “only dead fish go with the flow”.

“In the river, only the dead fish swim with the current, in the direction of the current and at the speed of the current. A fish that is alive goes to the left and the right of the current, and against the current.”

“I don't want to be a dead fish, I don't want to do what others are doing. All my life, I've always wanted to be first, different and unique.”

Despite the advent of technology and the arrival of smart watches, he believes the luxury watchmaking industry still has a future filled with hope.

“The more advanced technology becomes, the more we will be surrounded by objects that will go obsolete quickly. When that happens, the more we want to be connected with things that are lasting in our life: love and art. Art, including watchmaking, will play a far bigger role than ever before.”

Asked how he would sum up his half-century in watchmaking, he says: “I think I did well. I was honest, direct and authentic and I had a certain generosity towards my people. I think mine was a job well done.”

kimhoh@sph.com.sg



Who: Allan Chai, 66, designer

Watch: Cartier Santos 100 Chronograph

How much I paid for it: I can't remember

Why I like it: I bought this watch five years ago in Paris. I've always loved Cartier and this was love at first sight. It is not only beautifully designed, but also solidly made.

The watch complements my wardrobe of colourful shirts and it is also versatile, suitable for occasions both formal and casual.

I find watches indispensable because I take time very seriously. Whether I'm meeting a business contact or a friend, I'm always on time.

Punctuality is a sign of respect. When you are punctual, you are



Designer Allan Chai's Cartier Santos 100 Chronograph complements his wardrobe of colourful shirts. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ALLAN CHAI

telling the other party that you take them and their time seriously.

It is also a sign of sincerity and integrity. Unless I am absolutely sure I can deliver something on time, I will never make any promises.

Wong Kim Hoh

SPECIAL FEATURE



- **Dr Kenneth Lee:** Matching corduroy jacket and trousers, long-sleeved striped shirt, all by SANDRO. Loafers, by TOD'S.
- **Dr Shiau Ee Leng:** Perlee Signature bracelet in pink gold, Perlee diamonds bracelet in pink gold and diamonds and Magic Alhambra 2-motif earrings in pink gold, grey mother-of-pearl and diamonds, by VAN CLEEF & ARPELS.
- **Dr Sylvia Ramirez:** Perlee Couleurs bracelet in pink gold, carnelian and diamonds by VAN CLEEF & ARPELS.
- **Dr Siew Tuck Wah:** Pullover by SANDRO. Linen trousers, by COS. Lace-up shoes, by TOD'S. Omega Seamaster Diver 300M Co-Axial Master Chronometer 42MM in steel on rubber strap, by OMEGA

PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

Four doctors tells us more about the latest in medical aesthetics

PEOPLE WHO SEEK MEDICAL PROCEDURES to improve their physical appearance “not only want to be in good health, they also want to enjoy life to the fullest, be fit and minimise the effects of normal aging”, says the American Academy of Aesthetic Medicine. In addition, these patients are requesting quick, non-invasive procedures with minor downtime and very little risk.

In other words, attitudes towards medical aesthetic treatments – as they are called here – are favourable and appear to have become increasingly popular over the years.

“In multiple reports, including the most recent report from the American Society for Aesthetic Plastic Surgery, non-surgical facial aesthetic procedures have increased exponentially,” says Dr Sylvia Ramirez, medical and scientific director of Cutis Medical Laser Clinics in Singapore. “In fact, they reported a 44 per cent increase in demand for non-surgical procedures in the past five years.”

She adds that this trend is set to increase in 2019 and beyond because of increased awareness regarding the safety and effectiveness of non-invasive procedures; greater demands on both men and women for self-improvement; and the stronger emphasis on overall health and well-being where being “fit” also includes “looking as good as you feel.”

“Part of being successful in our careers and in the business environment not only includes looking vigorous and fit, but also fresh, youthful and less stressed,” she explains.

Medical aesthetic trends expected this year

According to Dr Kenneth Lee, co-founder of SW1 Clinic, non-invasive treatments are set to rise due to a paradigm shift in people’s mindset from merely treating existing problems to preventative therapy. “Skin tightening therapies using improved platforms such as Ultherapy will continue to dominate the anti-aging market,” he says.

“We have seen the average age of a patient seeking skin tightening treatments dropping from someone in their late 40s to someone in their 30s, showing that both men and women are more proactive in taking care of their looks, and very willing to invest in the future of their skin.”

Apart from taking preventive measures, Dr Ramirez says patients want to look as natural as possible.

“A recent analysis that we’ve done in our clinic database suggests that patients are looking for ‘rejuvenation’ and not ‘correction’ of a specific concern,” she reveals. “In addition, a recent global survey suggests that women in their 50s prefer to look ‘great for their age’ and not younger.”

Further, since facial aging is a result of changes in various layers of the facial tissues, which together, reposition the skin downwards, she predicts that the trend is towards combination treatments that yield

the most “balanced” results. “Because every layer of the skin and its underlying supportive structures goes through changes over time, each aspect needs to be addressed with a combination of treatments,” she says.

Dr Siew Tuck Wah, medical director of Radium Medical Aesthetics, agrees: “Combination anti-aging treatments will be the main trend this year. This involves the use of several treatment modalities, such as botulinum toxins, fillers and Ultherapy to holistically treat an aging face with the most natural results. Bio-stimulating fillers such as Radiesse which tighten and rejuvenate when injected under the skin have been very popular and will continue to be in 2019.”

In fact, he says that although Radiesse has been approved by the U.S Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) for more than 10 years, doctors are now discovering more new uses for the versatile filler. “Radiesse not only restores volume loss associated with aging, but also improves skin texture and lift sagging skin by inducing our skin to produce collagen and elastin.”

Meanwhile, the “evergreens” would still be pigmentation control like pigment lasers and anti-aging treatments like Ultherapy, says Dr Shiau Ee Leng, medical director of CSK Group of Aesthetic Clinics.

Looking fresh, not fake

When it comes to aging, skin laxity is the number one reason why we look older with age, says Dr Lee. “In fact, having a few wrinkles may not always make you look older, but having saggy skin and jowls is a surefire way of giving you age away.”

As we age, we lose collagen in our skin and deeper parts of facial tissues over time, says Dr Ramirez. “For instance, it has been shown that we make 1 per cent less collagen per year starting in our 20s, and by our 40s, we lose more collagen than we build, resulting in progressive changes in the skin. Once a woman hits menopause, a whole range of more visible and sudden changes may occur, such as up to 30 per cent collagen loss and thinning of the dermis and epidermis, drying of the skin, hyperpigmentation and hair growth changes. This collagen loss contributes to laxity and sagging skin showing as loss of definition of the jawline, formation of lines around the nose and mouth, making us look tired and older.”

Indeed, Dr Shiau says skin tightening is important after reaching the age of 25, when aging begins. But since people don’t immediately jump to surgical facelifts at the first signs of sagging, while others just want to prevent such signs for as long as possible, non-invasive skin tightening is often the option of choice.

“There are many options like quick-fix injectables such as botulinum toxin and fillers to correct the wrinkles,” she says. “Then there are maintenance therapies like Ultherapy which uses ultrasound energy, and other radiofrequency and infrared

devices and lasers.”

In general, collagen building procedures are of benefit to most patients, explains Dr Ramirez. “Ultherapy reaches the dermis and the underlying fibrous tissue (known as SMAS or superficial muscular aponeurotic system). The SMAS is an important structure that holds the skin in place, and is the target of some types of partial surgical facelifts. With Ultherapy, collagen building occurs in the deeper layer of the skin as well as in this SMAS layer. This happens without needles, cutting or disturbing the surface of the skin, and the procedure is well-tolerated by patients.

Ultherapy is a US FDA-cleared treatment whereby the safety and efficacy have been established through many clinical trials. As Ultherapy allows direct visualisation of the tissue that is being treated, doctors can see what layer of the skin is being treated and can precisely target the particular tissue to be tightened.

Of course, this does not mean there are no other skin tightening modalities available, says Dr Lee, noting that there are radiofrequency or ultrasound devices that target at a more superficial depth. As a result however, a few sessions may be needed for the effects to accumulate, and there is a need for more judicious maintenance sessions after, he says.

Dr Ramirez adds that there are many “copies” of Ultherapy, and these are not necessarily backed by clinical studies and may not be effective or safe.

WHAT THEY SAY



“As a typical man, I am very lazy when it comes to grooming, but I strongly believe it is important to look fresh. Hence, I take time off my busy schedule to have my maintenance treatments done – yearly Ultherapy and fillers, quarterly lasers, for example. When we look fresh, we feel better and more confident.”

Dr Siew Tuck Wah



“Like most women, I feel that it is not always easy to look and feel your best. It is a conscious, moment-by-moment decision to make the right choices for health and well-being, whether from the physical, emotional or spiritual aspect.”

Dr Sylvia Ramirez



“First, accept and love yourself, and then as a well-loved person, love others.”

Dr Shiau Ee Leng



“I believe that we all have the potential to live without limits, and be the best version of ourselves. For me, it’s very simple really. I try to live in the present, not in the past nor the future. I believe that it’s what you do in the present that can change your future and redeem your past.”

Dr Kenneth Lee

GIGS

Shallow Levee
Indie music band Shallow Levee from Kaohsiung, Taiwan, perform their original compositions, sung in Mandarin and Hokkien. Get drawn into the group's emotive and melodious songs, written by vocalist and guitarist Elaine Tsai, based on her life experiences.
WHERE: Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 6.45, 8.8 & 9.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

In::music – Julia Wu
Rising R&B star Julia Wu, 24, sets the Mandopop music industry alight with her soulful voice and versatile musicality. The Australia-born Chinese, a seasoned performer with more than 10 years of classical music training, will present her spin on pop music at her Singapore debut.
WHERE: Esplanade Annexe Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 23, 4pm **ADMISSION:** \$30 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

The Big Break
Bilingual band The Big Break – Alfe Kim (drums), Shern Wong (guitar), Shaun Chen (keyboard), Benjamin Hum and Novabelle (vocals) – will serenade you with familiar Mandarin and Cantonese hits.
WHERE: Esplanade Outdoor Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 23, 7.15, 8.45 & 10.15pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

Plini (Aus) – Live In Singapore
Australian musician Plini, who records almost everything by himself in his bedroom – usually playing the guitar and the bass, with programmed drums on his first compositions – will be holding his first concert in Singapore.
WHERE: EBX Live Space – Ebenex, 5 Pereira Road **MRT:** Tai Seng **WHEN:** Feb 24, 6.30 – 10pm **ADMISSION:** \$70 – \$100, tickets from plini.peatix.com **INFO:** bit.ly/2GAVRj7

Evening Classics By More Than Music
More Than Music is a chamber music concert series founded in 2013 by two of Singapore's top young musicians, pianist Abigail Sin and violinist Loh Jun Hong. Both are returning to Singapore after postgraduate studies – Sin from New York and Loh from London.
WHERE: Esplanade Concourse, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 27, 6.45 & 7.45pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

Let It Be Me: The Hits Of The Everly Brothers
Peter Chua returns with his band to charm the audience with songs by The Everly Brothers. Sing along to hits such as Bye Bye Love, Wake Up Little Susie, All I Have To Do Is Dream and Let It Be Me.
WHERE: Esplanade Recital Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** March 4, 10.30am & 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$15 **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

Adam Cheng & Liza Wang
Legendary Hong Kong actor and singer Adam Cheng and veteran Hong Kong actress, singer and host Liza Wang team up to dazzle Singapore fans with their timeless golden melodies.
WHERE: Resorts World Ballroom, Resorts World Convention Centre, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** May 25, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$38 – \$238 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

GigPicks

Anjali Raguraman recommends



THE RAGHU DIXIT PROJECT
The Raghu Dixit Project return to Singapore with their brand of contemporary Indian folk music. Expect a high-energy set as lead singer Raghu Dixit (above) weaves between songs in Hindi and Kannada (from their home state of Karnataka), such as Jag Changa and Gudugudiya Sedi Nodo. Dixit is also featured on Train Song, from Bollywood hip-hop film Gully Boy, which is screening now.
WHERE: Capitol Theatre, 17 Stamford Road **MRT:** City Hall **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$40, \$70 and \$100 from www.showtickets.asia



HYUKOH – LIVE IN SINGAPORE
South Korean indie-rock quartet Hyukoh (above) have emerged from the underground scene to play at festivals around the region and even embark on a North American tour. After their last show here in 2017, they return to Singapore to promote their latest EP, 24: How To Find True Love And Happiness, which centres on love, loss of innocence and friendship.
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade **WHEN:** Monday, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$88, \$108, \$128 and \$148 from www.apactix.com

DUB SKANK'IN HIFI X CANVAS CLUB PRESENT BOB MARLEY BIRTHDAY BASH
It is all about One Love at Canvas, where the club will be celebrating the music and belated birthday of reggae king Bob Marley. There will be live music by acclaimed live-looping master Randolph Arriola and DJ sets by Rumshot and Submerge. Caribbean-inspired food and crafts

will also be sold outside the venue along the banks of the Singapore river.
WHERE: Canvas Club, B1-01 The Riverwalk, 20 Upper Circular Road **MRT:** Clarke Quay **WHEN:** Sunday, 4pm till late **ADMISSION:** Pre-sale tickets at \$30 via bit.ly/bmarleybash2019 or \$40 for tickets at the door (includes one drink) **INFO:** bit.ly/2E6tZ4t



PHOTOS: TEAMWORK PRODUCTIONS, ESPLANADE – THEATRES ON THE BAY, COLLECTIVE MINDS

JESS CONNELLY & ALEXTBH
Kilo Lounge plays host to two up-and-coming South-east Asian stars this weekend. Australian-Filipina R&B singer Jess Connelly (above), who has opened for Chance The Rapper in Manila, recently released her mixtape, JCON. Meanwhile, Alextbh blends R&B

and pop and continues his ascent with his latest single, No Space.
WHERE: Kilo Lounge, 01-02, 21 Tanjong Pagar Road **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 8 to 10pm **ADMISSION:** \$40 for advance tickets via bitly.com/JCONSG or \$50 at the door. For those aged 18 and above

CHARITY

World Down Syndrome Day
Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) will be celebrating World Down Syndrome Day to raise awareness of the condition and promote inclusivity with a community walk and family carnival. This year's theme – Leave No One Behind – highlights the importance for everyone to embrace differences and walk alongside people with Down syndrome.
WHERE: Central Plaza, Our Tampines Hub, 1 Tampines Walk **MRT:** Tampines **WHEN:** March 16, 8am – 3pm

ADMISSION: Free, \$20 for community walk **TEL:** 6500-9313 (Joanne) **INFO:** E-mail joanne@downsyndrome-association.org

TALKS

Careers Connect On-The-Go
This talk brings career-matching services to the heartland, to help those looking for a job or hoping to kick-start their job search. Career coaching, job-matching services and job-search workshops are available.
WHERE: Open field beside Compass One, 1 Sengkang Square **MRT:** Sengkang **WHEN:** Wed – Feb 24, 11am – 8pm **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6883-5885 **INFO:** adaptandgrow.sg/careersconnect

Adapt And Grow Roadshow
The initiative by Workforce Singapore aims to help workers to adapt to changing job demands, as well as those seeking guidance in navigating career challenges or looking for new career opportunities.
WHERE: Atrium, Level 2 Compass One, 1 Sengkang Square **MRT:** Sengkang **WHEN:** Thu – Feb 24, 10am – 10pm **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6883-5885 **INFO:** adaptandgrow.sg/town

Latin American Economic Outlook
Between trade tensions and new governments, Latin America's economy will face challenges this year. This event features a series of presentations by experts from BB Securities (Banco do Brasil) and Scotiabank.
WHERE: Room T1A Trade Association Hub, 9 Jurong Town Hall Road

MRT: Jurong East **WHEN:** Feb 27, 8.30 – 10.30am **ADMISSION:** \$10, register at bit.ly/2tIMpYR **INFO:** E-mail info@latamcham.org

British Council's Study UK Fair
Representatives from participating British schools, colleges and universities will talk about the programmes available – from undergraduate and postgraduate/MBA courses to pre-university and professional ones, including studying in Singapore with a partner institution. There will also be seminars giving tips on studying in Britain.
WHERE: Level 3, Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre, 1 Raffles Boulevard **MRT:** Esplanade/Promenade **WHEN:** March 2, 10.30am – 5.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6473-1111 **INFO:** bit.ly/StudyUKFairReg

CLASSES

The Role Of A Director With K. Rajagopal
Veteran film-maker K. Rajagopal shares what makes a good director and how he can inspire his cast and crew to harness their talents for the film. Topics include creative approaches to shooting a movie, working with actors and crew members and a director's responsibilities.
WHERE: Objectifs – Centre for Photography & Film, 155 Middle Road **MRT:** Bencoolen/Bugis **WHEN:** Wed, 7.30 – 10pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail ciNE65@objectifs.com.sg to register

ST English Masterclass (The Executive Edition Special: Creative Writing)

This course is conducted by Felix Cheong, who has published 13 books across various genres, from poetry to short stories. The recipient of the 2000 Young Artist award, who has worked in the media industry for more than 20 years, holds a master's degree in creative writing and teaches journalism at the University of Newcastle and Murdoch University. He will cover topics such as the basics of narrative writing, generating story ideas and creating characters; plots, twists and endings; as well as turning life experience into stories and the publishing process.
WHERE: SPH News Centre, 1000 Toa Payoh North **MRT:** Braddell **WHEN:** Thu, 10am – 6pm (lunch provided) **ADMISSION:** \$499 a person, sign up at stskills.sg **TEL:** 6319-5076 **INFO:** E-mail stmasterclass@sph.com.sg

SPORTS

50 Hours Non-Stop Run
The run, in its fifth year and organised by Tampines West Community Sports Club, challenges participants to push their limits in achieving a running distance ranging from 21.5km to 86km within a 50-hour duration. This is a non-competitive event and times are not recorded.
WHERE: Bedok Reservoir Park **MRT:** Bedok **WHEN:** April 19 (9am) – April 21 (11am) **ADMISSION:** \$24 (\$20 for PAssion card members) for 43km category **INFO:** Sign up at bit.ly/2RZjRya (closing date is Feb 28)

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Pan-fried Salmon Steak (right) from Baan Ying. PHOTO: BAAN YING



FOOD

PROMOTIONS

Ce La Vi's Sky High Brunch

Back for its first edition of the year tomorrow, Ce La Vi's Sky High Brunch includes Asian dishes with a modern flair, alongside exclusive cocktails and free-flow Veuve Clicquot champagne. Guests can also indulge in tropical-themed beats by Ce La Vi's resident DJs, set against the backdrop of Singapore's iconic skyline.

WHERE: Marina Bay Sands Tower 3, 1 Bayfront Avenue **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Tomorrow, noon - 4pm **PRICE:** \$188++ a person **TEL:** 6508-2188 **INFO:** E-mail reservation-sg@celavi.com

Fast Wraps At Pita Tree Forum

Choose from five different pitas or wraps at Pita Tree Mediterranean Grilled Kebabs' new kiosk at Forum The Shopping Mall - Minced Beef (\$11.90), Chicken Shish (\$11.90), Greek Chicken Avocado (\$12.90), Lamb Kufte (\$12.90), Authentic Falafel (\$11) - or the Chicken Shish & Lamb Kufte (\$15 a skewer). **WHERE:** 01-K3 Forum The Shopping Mall, 583 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** 11 - 3am (till 6am on Fri, Sat & eve of public holiday) **PRICE:** \$11 - \$15 **TEL:** 6219-3234 **INFO:** pitatree.com

The Great Baan Ying Brunch

The Great Baan Ying Brunch offers Thai favourites that include one main course - Angus Beef Steak, Bone-in Iberico Pork Chop (add \$9.80++), Grilled Large River Prawns or Pan-fried Salmon Steak - and a buffet spread of up to 15 appetisers, sides and desserts on rotation every weekend. **WHERE:** 02-07 Royal Square @ Novena, 103 Irrawaddy Road **MRT:** Novena **WHEN:** 11am - 3pm (Sat & Sun) **PRICE:** \$38.80++ an adult (\$29.80++ for free-flow wine & beer), \$19.40++ a child (four - 10 years old; free for those under three) **TEL:** 9111-7852 **INFO:** E-mail sawasdee@baanying.sg

Swensen's Beary Lovely Cake

Swensen's pink Beary Lovely Cake (350g) combines Cookies & Cream and strawberry-flavoured ice cream within, topped with a little bear made with fondant. Specially created for Valentine's Day, the cake is available for dine-in or takeaway until the end of this month. **WHERE:** All Swensen's & Earle Swensen's outlets & online at swensens.com.sg **WHEN:** Till Feb 28 **PRICE:** \$27.90+ for takeaway/ \$27.90++ for dine-in **TEL:** 6788-8128 **INFO:** E-mail swensens@abr.com.sg

Cure & Gallery By Chele Four-Hands Experience

Chef-owners Andrew Walsh of Cure and Chele Gonzalez of Metro Manila's Gallery by Chele's six-course tasting menu will feature dishes such as chef Gonzalez's Tiger's Milk of scallops ceviche and Fired! Pulpo, a Spanish-Filipino creation of octopus with papaya; and chef Walsh's Pigeon-Hoisin paired with cherries and parfait. **WHERE:** 21 Keong Saik Road **MRT:** Outram Park **WHEN:** Feb 27 & 28, 6 - 10pm **PRICE:** \$168++ a person, add \$120++ for wine-pairing **TEL:** 6221-2189 **INFO:** curesingapore.com

March School Break: Kids Eat Well For Free At Jamie's Italian

One child (up to 12 years old) gets a free dish from the kids' menu for every adult main course ordered from the regular a la carte menu at Jamie's Italian's VivoCity and Forum outlets. Each kids' menu dish (\$12++), such as the Margherita Pizza, the Fantastic Fish Stew or the Happy Chicken Lollipops, comes with a complimentary drink. **WHERE (MRT):** 01-165/166/167 VivoCity, 1 Harbourfront Walk (HarbourFront); 01-01/04 Forum Shopping Mall, 583 Orchard Road (Orchard) **WHEN:** March 18 - 22; VivoCity: noon - 9pm (Mon - Thu), noon - 10pm (Fri); Forum: 11.30am - 10pm (Mon - Thu), 11.30am - 11pm (Fri) **PRICE:** \$12++ or free with adult main course **TEL:** 6733-5500 (VivoCity)/6655-7676 (Forum) **INFO:** jamieoliver.com/italian/singapore

F&B FESTIVALS

Sri Lankan Food Fest

Experience authentic Sri Lankan cuisine as chef Publis Silva, executive chef of Mount Lavinia Hotel Colombo, collaborates with chef Sam Chin, executive sous chef of Triple Three, to whip up dishes such as Sri Lankan Crab, Fish Ambulthiyal and Devilled Prawn. **WHERE:** Triple Three Restaurant, Mandarin Orchard Singapore, 333 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Today, noon - 2.30pm **PRICE:** \$78++ an adult; \$28++ a child **TEL:** 6831-6288 **INFO:** E-mail dine.orchard@meritushotels.com

Michelin Guide Street Food Festival

Michelin and Robert Parker Wine Advocate are bringing back the Michelin Guide Street Food Festival. The third edition features iconic local names such as Tai Wah Pork Noodle, Rolina Traditional Hainanese Curry Puff and Traditional Haig Road Putu Piring. New additions include Burnt Ends, Shisen Hanten and Toritama Shirokane. **WHERE:** The Coliseum, Resorts World Sentosa, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Feb 22 & 23; 5 - 7.30pm, 8 - 10.30pm; Feb 24: 10am - 12.30pm, 1 - 3.30pm **PRICE/INFO:** Tickets at \$30 - \$200 from tinyurl.com/michstreet2019; dishes from \$3

Early Bird Discounts For Singapore Cocktail Festival

The Singapore Cocktail Festival returns in May, but tickets are already on sale at early-bird discounts. The larger-than-ever programme line-up brings together Singapore's vibrant cocktail scene and the best bartenders and bars from around the world. **WHERE:** Empress Lawn, 10 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** May 10 - 18, 4 - 11pm (early-bird discounts close on Feb 28) **PRICE:** Cocktails at \$12 nett each; tickets from \$35 (\$30 for early birds) for one-day pass to \$180 (\$162) for Jumbo Party Pack **INFO:** E-mail hello@sgcocktailfest.com

WINE EVENTS

The Cuisine Of Chef Lino Sauro With Frescobaldi Wines

The six-course menu includes raw shrimp (ama ebi), poached mackerel and housemade chitarra spaghetti. Featured wines include Pomino Bianco 2017 and Nipozzano Chianti Rufina Riserva 2014. **WHERE:** Gattopardo Ristorante di Mare, 34 Tras Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Thu, 7pm **PRICE:** \$161++ a person (\$128.80++ for HSBC cardholders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 **INFO:** E-mail gustoitaliano@sph.com.sg

Wan Hao Treasures & Cloudy Bay Wines

Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel's Wan Hao Chinese Restaurant celebrates its re-opening with a special dinner event paired with the wines of Cloudy Bay Winery. Diners can expect signature favourites such as Wan Hao's double-boiled superior soup and tea-smoked wagyu beef with king mushroom, to be accompanied by Cloudy Bay's Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Te Koko and Pinot Noir. **WHERE:** Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel, 320 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Feb 28, 7pm **PRICE:** \$233.05 nett a person (\$174.20 for SPH subscribers) **TEL:** 6831-4605 **INFO:** E-mail mhrs.sindt.fb.reservations@marriotthotels.com

Handpicked Wines With Violet Oon's British Hainanese Dishes

Violet Oon whips up a feast of British Hainanese dishes, to be paired with Handpicked Wines such as the medium-bodied Rose and full-bodied Cabernet Sauvignon. Each diner gets a bottle of Handpicked Regional Selection Rose worth \$48. **WHERE:** 03-22 Ion Orchard, 2 Orchard Turn **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** March 1, 7pm **PRICE:** \$149++ a person (\$119.20++ for Citi Card holders) **TEL:** 6319-4038 **INFO:** E-mail asianmasters@sph.com.sg

FoodPicks

Eunice Quek Food Correspondent recommends



BARISTART'S MILKY WAY

When it comes to good coffee, the focus has always been on the bean, not the milk.

So when Baristart Coffee from Hokkaido boasts the use of full cream Hokkaido Biei Jersey Milk, I am intrigued. The milk comes from brown Jersey cows from Biei in Hokkaido and there are apparently only 800 of such cattle left.

I sample the milk on its own - it is rich and creamy and has a delicate sweetness. It lends a lovely richness to my hot latte (\$6.70+, right), which comes complete with pretty latte art. To savour more milk, go for the cold Biei Jersey milk coffee (\$7.50+), where a shot of coffee is added to a small carafe of milk. What I like is that the milk never overpowers the coffee flavour.

Food options at the cosy 40-seat cafe include tuna and avocado salad with wasabi dressing (\$14.80+), Hokkaido carbonara (\$17.80+), and tonkatsu sando (\$16.80+) - fried pork sandwich with fries. The carbonara uses the same Biei Jersey Milk, which adds extra creaminess to the hearty dish.

If you have no space for food, I suggest just getting a latte and the must-have cream puff (\$4.50, right) - one of the best I have had so far. The crisp pastry is loaded with creamy custard made with the Biei Jersey Milk - perfect for tea time.

WHERE: Baristart, 65 Tras Street **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **OPEN:** 10am to 10pm daily **TEL:** 6904-3169 **INFO:** <https://bit.ly/2N4Vu1l>



PHOTOS: BARISTART, GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL, MONTI, RAMEN CHAMPION SINGAPORE



NEW DISHES AT RAMEN CHAMPION

With the plethora of dining options at Changi Airport, food outlets have to up their game to stand out. Ramen Champion at Terminal 3 recently revamped its outlet to feature Hokkaido-themed dishes.

I enjoy the Stamina Miso Ramen (\$16.80) - inspired by Hokkaido's Mount Yotei - which is topped with all my favourite ingredients such as Hokkaido corn, butter, sukiyaki-style meat, torched pork belly char siew and ajitama (ramen egg with soft yolk).

As the name suggests, you do need some stamina to finish this, so indulge in this miso and tonkotsu-based ramen with a friend. For something lighter, go for the

shio-based Hokadate Kaisen Ramen (\$18.80, above), topped with prawns, squid and scallops.

Vegetarians can try the Vegetable Potage Tsukemen (\$16.80), with a rich vegetable broth made with pumpkins, corn and carrots, as well as Hokkaido milk.

Dessert highlights include kakigori (shaved ice dessert, from \$11.80) with flavours such as hojicha, Royal Milk Tea, strawberry and Milo; and brulee toast (\$13.80) with a crisp torched crust.

WHERE: Ramen Champion, B2-58 Changi Airport Terminal 3, 65 Airport Boulevard **MRT:** Changi Airport **OPEN:** 10.30am to 11pm daily **TEL:** 6214-2958 **INFO:** www.facebook.com/ramenchampionsingapore



THE FIORENTINA EXPERIENCE AT MONTI

I never say no to a good steak and The Fiorentina Experience at Italian restaurant Monti is right up my alley.

The new menu offers a selection of T-Bone steaks (1.1kg each, with tenderloin and sirloin cuts, good for four people), and my favourite is the juicy and flavourful Mayura Full-Blood Wagyu T-Bone (\$320++), left). The meat, from beef producer Mayura Station in South Australia, has a marbling score of 9+ and the cows feed on grains and chocolate.

Other delicious options include the Sanchoku F1 Wagyu T-Bone (\$220++) and Rangers Valley Black Onyx T-Bone (\$180++). Get your camera ready as the steaks are carved and flamed tableside, and served with corn, potatoes and asparagus.

Monti's housemade pasta can't be missed, so go for the fregola (\$35++) with tiger prawns, Boston mussels, clams and Sardinian bottarga (salted, cured fish roe) cooked in a rich lobster bisque. The small balls of pasta, like barley pearls, have a chewy bite to them and I like that they soak up the lobster flavour.

Come March 1, look out also for the restaurant's House Of Ravioli selection, which plays on various stuffed pasta options, such as wagyu agnolotti (stuffed small square pasta) with cream of bone marrow, rosemary gremolata (herb sauce) and butter sage sauce.

WHERE: Monti, 1-Pavilion, 82 Collyer Quay **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Noon to 2.30pm (weekdays), 9.30am to 5pm (weekends and public holidays), 6 to 10.30pm daily **TEL:** 6535-0724 **INFO:** www.monti.sg

ARTS

BOOKS

Singapore Literature Book Club: 1819 By Isa Kamari

Join Isa Kamari, writer and Cultural Medallion recipient, for a discussion of his novel 1819 – the year in which both Stamford Raffles and Muslim saint Habib Noh arrived in Singapore. This story looks at the tense and colourful relationship between the two historical figures.
WHERE: Multi-Purpose Room, Central Public Library, Basement 1 National Library Building, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** City Hall/Bugis **WHEN:** Feb 21, 7 - 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail enquiry@nlb.gov.sg

The Garden Party
By Katherine Mansfield

Katherine Mansfield's The Garden Party is an intriguing story that first appeared in 1922. Young Laura Sheridan enjoys her wealthy family's garden party before she visits her working-class neighbours and learns about death. Dr Gwee Li Sui's lecture will discuss many of these themes in relation to Mansfield's distinct style of storytelling. The lecture is part of the How To Fall In Love With Classics series.
WHERE: Programme Zone, Central Public Library, Basement 1 National Library Building, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** City Hall/Bugis **WHEN:** Feb 28, 7 - 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail enquiry@nlb.gov.sg

CONCERTS

Painted Skin – An Opera In Concert

An exciting fusion of Western operatic style and Peking opera elements, Painted Skin – An Opera In Concert is an ambitious adaptation of the classic Chinese short story from Strange Tales From A Chinese Studio by Pu Songling. Presented as an opera in concert, a dramatic narrative unfolds, revealing an inner world of greed, lust and hypocrisy concealed under the glamorous veneers humans wear.
WHERE: Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** Feb 23, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$20 - \$38 **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

NUS Guitar Ensemble's Kaleidoscope

Kaleidoscope is a celebration of the vibrancy of NUS Guitar Ensemble's musical culture and the colourful repertoire it has performed since its inception. This year's line-up draws from Japanese, Spanish and Western classical music genres and will introduce the audience to the roots of the ensemble's musical identity.
WHERE: NUS University Cultural Centre **MRT:** Kent Ridge **WHEN:** March 2, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$25 (\$15 for students), tickets from apactix.com

Being: Glad That I Live

Presented by Singapore Chinese Girls' School, Being: Glad That I Live is the opening concert of the school's 120th anniversary held in conjunction with the Singapore Bicentennial. It explores what the world would look like if it was governed by a universal operating system that controlled everything people did.
WHERE: MES Theatre, 1 Stars Avenue **MRT:** one-north **WHEN:** Feb 23, 2.30 & 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$45 - \$100 (2.30pm show: \$30 - \$60) **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

DANCE

Don Quixote By Singapore Dance Theatre

This dazzling, humorous and virtuosic work sets out on a series of chivalrous acts, whimsical twists and comically feigned suicide.
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/ City Hall **WHEN:** March 7 & 8, 8pm; March 9, 1 & 8pm; March 10, 1 & 7pm **ADMISSION:** \$40 - \$80 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

EXHIBITIONS (GALLERIES)

Of Dreams And Contemplation: From Richard Koh's Collection

Gallerist Richard Koh's personal collection will be shown for the first time. Presented by The Private Museum in conjunction with Singapore Art Week, Of Dreams And Contemplation is the inaugural showcase of Koh's collection spanning more than two decades and reflects his ruminations, personalities and interests through the works of 30 artists.
WHERE: The Private Museum, 02-06, 51 Waterloo Street **MRT:** Bras Basah **WHEN:** Till March 3: 10am - 7pm (Mon - Fri), 11am - 5pm (Sat & Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail clara@theprivatemuseum.org

Journeys & Discoveries: Ho Sou Ping's Solo Exhibition

This fourth solo exhibition of Artcommune Gallery's founder,

ArtsPicks

Akshita Nanda Arts Correspondent recommends

HUAYI – CHINESE FESTIVAL OF ARTS



THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

The annual Huayi – Chinese Festival of Arts presented by the Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay opens this weekend. A top draw is The Tragedy Of Hamlet, Prince Of Denmark, co-commissioned by the Esplanade and Hong Kong Arts Festival. Directed by acclaimed Beijing theatre director Li Liuyi, the play is based on a new Chinese translation from the Shakespeare Folio Translation Project. It stars Chinese film star Hu Jun (above left) as Hamlet, with stage veterans Pu Cunxin and Lu Fang (above right) playing double roles. Pu is Hamlet's father and uncle; and Lu, Hamlet's mother and lover Ophelia.
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** City Hall/Esplanade **WHEN:** Today and tomorrow, 8pm; Sunday, 2.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$38 to \$128 from www.esplanade.com or from Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg) **INFO:** www.esplanade.com



DEAR JOHN

In this intriguing experimental production (above) by Taiwanese group M.O.V.E. Theatre, a dancer is connected to the inner workings of the piano, creating sounds as she moves.
Dance, music and kinetic art installation are used to

investigate the process of making sound, in a work that pays homage to the artistic process of the late American composer John Cage.
WHERE: Esplanade Theatre Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** City Hall/ Esplanade **WHEN:** Today, 8pm; and tomorrow, 3 and 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$38 from Sistic



ONCE UPON A TIME 2019

The Teng Ensemble (above) performs popular and festive melodies for Chinese New Year at this concert presented by Mapletree Investments. The ensemble is rooted both in Chinese instrumental tradition and contemporary music. This performance also features young musicians from the Guzheng

Association (Singapore) and singer-songwriter Ling Kai.
WHERE: Level 3 SkyPark Amphitheatre, VivoCity, 1 Harbourfront Walk **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$4, \$3 for children below age 14, from mapletree16feb.peatix.com

SCO COMMUNITY CONCERT: SPRING ABUNDANCE AT FAR EAST PLAZA

Led by resident conductor Quek Ling Kiong (right), the Singapore Chinese Orchestra will perform a festive repertoire including resident music arranger Sim Boon Yew's Spring Festival Medley and Beijing-born composer Kwan Nai-Chung's New Year's Eve, based on his childhood memories of celebrating the arrival of spring.
Also, keep an ear out for a medley of theme songs from popular anime feature films produced by Studio Ghibli.
WHERE: Driveway of Far East Plaza, 14 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 6pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.sco.com.sg



PHOTOS: EJUN LOW, ESPLANADE – THEATRES ON THE BAY, ETANG CHEN, SINGAPORE CHINESE ORCHESTRA

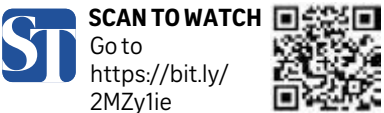
Bookmark This! Dreams and a drowning Bangkok

Join Life reporters Olivia Ho (right) and Toh Wen Li (far right) in this new monthly podcast by The Straits Times in which they talk about books in the headlines and recommend new reads.

In this episode, they dip into dreams and a drowning city in Singaporean poet Cyril Wong's phantasmagoric collection Oneiros, recently reprinted by Math Paper Press, and Thai author Pitchaya Sudbanthad's debut novel Bangkok Wakes To Rain, out later this month, which jumps through time from the 19th century to a post-diluvian future.



ST PHOTO: RICHARD NEWLOVE



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Ho Sou Ping, features about 20 oil, watercolour and ink works created from 2012 to last year.
WHERE: Merlin Gallery, 01-11 Waterloo Centre, 261 Waterloo Street **MRT:** Bencoolen **WHEN:** Feb 22 - March 10, noon - 7pm (till 5pm on Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 9747-9046 **INFO:** E-mail hosouping@gmail.com

Back To The Future: Exhibition By Wunna Aung & Thu Myat

Wunna Aung is passionate about the historical past of his country. Thu Myat is a science-fiction enthusiast. Back To The Future operates like a time-travel machine, inviting viewers to discover the last dynasty of Burma in brilliant colours as well as modern interpretations of traditional guardians.
WHERE: Lobby, Royal Plaza on Scotts, 25 Scotts Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Till March 17 **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** intersections.com.sg

Planes & Envelopes: An Exhibition By Hazel Lim & Ginette Chittick

Pared-down materials such as kapok yarn and semi-translucent paper are fashioned through intricate patterning to create large-scale objects that celebrate the versatility of the materials and highlight their intrinsic forms, colours and materiality.
WHERE: UltraSuperNew Gallery, 107 Rowell Road **MRT:** Jalan Besar

WHEN: March 20, 7 - 11pm; March 21 - April 14, 11am - 7pm (Tue - Sat), 11am - 3pm (Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** tinyurl.com/limchittick

THEATRE

Four Four Eight

Inspired by British playwright Sarah Kane's last work, 4.48 Psychosis, Young Artist Award recipient Liu Xiaoyi presents a new work that leads audiences into a social construct where every member becomes a participant in a space of gathering and camaraderie and also urban loneliness – the bar.
WHERE: The ExciseMan Whisky Bar, 02-27 Esplanade Mall **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Tue - Feb 23, 6 - 11.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$58 **INFO:** www.esplanade.com

Cash On Delivery

The Stage Club kicks off its 2019 season with a production of Michael Cooney's comedy Cash On Delivery. Directed by Nick Perry, the story revolves around a young married man who cheats the welfare system by claiming every kind of benefit for numerous people he pretends are staying at his address, and the ensuing farce when he is forced to prove that his "lodgers" are real people.
WHERE: KC Arts Centre – Home of SRT,

20 Merbau Road, Robertson Quay **MRT:** Clarke Quay/Fort Canning **WHEN:** Wed - Feb 23, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$37 - \$42 (concession: \$22, group discounts available) **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

RS – A Play On Relationship

There are many ways in which people are connected; whether it is through family, faith, love or even hatred. RS presents how these connections can bring different sets of emotions and consequences through five acts.
WHERE: Studio One, The Playtent, 180 Joo Chiat Road **MRT:** Eunos **WHEN:** Feb 28 - March 1, 8pm; March 2 & 3, 3 & 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$15 a ticket (\$13 for groups of five or more) **TEL:** 8126-5631 **INFO:** rstheatreproduction.wordpress.com

The Severing Sword

Nam Hwa Opera presents the world premiere of The Severing Sword, a brand-new Teochew opera adapted from a beloved wuxia novel by Liang Yusheng.
WHERE: Victoria Theatre, 9 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** March 15 - 17, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$20 - \$50 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.sistic.com.sg

FILMS

Spider-Man: Into The Spider-Verse (2018, PG)
Phil Lord and Christopher Miller, the creative minds behind The Lego Movie (2014) and 21 Jump Street (2012), bring their talents to a fresh vision of a different Spider-Man Universe, with a groundbreaking visual style. This film introduces Brooklyn teen Miles Morales and the limitless possibilities of the Spider-Verse.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Today, 5pm; tomorrow, 5.40pm
ADMISSION: \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

C'est La Vie! (2017, NC16)
Pierre and Helena are getting married in a magnificent wedding held in a 17th-century chateau. Max the caterer has coordinated everything. A series of unfortunate events disrupts the finely timed planning and each moment of happiness risks turning into a disaster. In French with English subtitles.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Today, 8.30pm; tomorrow, 8.45pm
ADMISSION: \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Downtown East Outdoor Movie Screening: Wall-E (2008, G)
In the distant future, a waste-collecting robot embarks on a journey that will decide the fate of mankind. There will be free rainbow popcorn and nachos and cheese.
WHERE: Open Plaza 2 (outside D'Marquee), Downtown East, 1 Pasir Ris Close **MRT:** Pasir Ris **WHEN:** Feb 23, 7.30 - 10pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** downtowneast.com.sg

Stage Russia: King Lear (2018, PG)
This recorded screening from the Moscow Satirikon Theatre (in Russian with English subtitles) is Yuri Butusov's award-winning staging of Shakespeare's King Lear, which combines elements of futurism, motif lighting and respect for the source material. It features Golden Mask Award-winning actor Konstantin Raikin as Lear.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Feb 23, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$25 (standard), \$23 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Free Solo (2019, PG13)
Free Solo is a portrait of the free soloist climber Alex Honnold as he prepares to achieve his lifelong dream – climbing the face of the world's most famous rock – the El Capitan in Yosemite National Park – without a rope.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road
MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Feb 24, 2.30pm; Feb 27, 8.30pm; March 2, 2.30pm, March 3, 2pm
ADMISSION: \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Border (2018, M18)
Like the misfits at its heart, Border (in Swedish with English subtitles) defies easy categorisation. Adapted from Swedish writer John Ajvide Lindqvist's novella, it manoeuvres through multiple genres, from Nordic noir to coming-of-age romance to supernatural horror. An immigrant himself, director Ali Abbasi confidently draws on his outsider experience while invoking Nordic mythology to tell a story at once timely and timeless.
WHERE: GV Paya Lebar, 03-107 SingPost Centre, 10 Eunos Road 8
MRT: Paya Lebar **WHEN:** March 6, 9pm
ADMISSION: Singapore Film Society membership from \$18 a month
TEL: 9017-0160 **INFO:** E-mail info@singaporefilmsociety.com

NATURE

A Walk With Your Neighbours: The Monkeys Of Bukit Timah
The long-tailed macaques are the most conspicuous animals at Bukit Timah. Although commonly seen, they are very misunderstood. The world they live in comprises kin networks, power struggles, friends, foes and a complex social network.
WHERE: Visitor Centre's Front Courtyard, Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, Hindhede Drive
MRT: Beauty World **WHEN:** Feb 23, 5 - 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** E-mail sgmonkeywalk@gmail.com

West Marsh Visit With The Kranji Marshals
The West Marsh, within the Core Conservation Area of Kranji Marshes, is a special area designated for the conservation of marsh birds. To minimise disturbances to these shy animals and other wildlife, access to this section is restricted to guided activities organised by NParks and its partners. Several times a year, visitors can access this section when NParks volunteers – the Kranji Marshals – act as guides.
WHERE: West Marsh (gate near

Moorhen Blind), 11 Neo Tiew Lane 2
MRT: Kranji **WHEN:** March 2, 7.30 - 11am **ADMISSION:** Free
TEL: 6794-1401 **INFO:** E-mail nparks_sbwr@nparks.gov.sg

TOURS

Family Farm Tour
Experience being a farmer for a day, feed chickens and find out how farm staff with autism sow seeds. Smell, taste and touch edible plants and understand the importance of using sustainable, pesticide-free farming methods. Participants take home a set of microgreens seed kit worth \$15.
WHERE: Citizen Farm, 60 Jalan Penjara **MRT:** Queenstown
WHEN: Feb 23, 10am - noon
ADMISSION: \$38 a person, includes materials **INFO:** E-mail learn@ediblegardencity.com

KIDS

Protect Our Pangolins
In conjunction with World Pangolin Day, this interactive 90-minute parent-child bonding session includes storytelling and craft activities to learn about the world's most trafficked mammal – pangolins.
WHERE: Windsor Nature Park (Pavilion), 30 Venus Road
MRT: Marymount **WHEN:** Feb 23, 9.30 - 11am **ADMISSION:** Free, register at nparks.gov.sg **INFO:** E-mail lim_siew_hong@nparks.gov.sg

Kids' Fun With Rainforest Life
The green domain at the end of Rifle Range Road is home to an assemblage of wildlife unique to the tropical rainforest. This tour is organised by Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS).
WHERE: Rifle Range Road (meeting point to be advised) **MRT:** Beauty World **WHEN:** Feb 24, 8 - 10 am
ADMISSION: \$2 a child (NSS member), \$10 a child (non-member); register child (four - 12 years old) at tinyurl.com/nsskidsvent by tomorrow **INFO:** E-mail gloria_seow@yahoo.com

Disney On Ice: Mickey's Super Celebration
Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck and Goofy join Mickey on a journey to discover his favourite memory of this time. Using Mickey's Mouse Pad, show hosts invite fans to be a part of the action and help the gang as they venture through Disney stories.
WHERE: Singapore Indoor Stadium, 2 Stadium Walk **MRT:** Stadium
WHEN: March 20 (7pm), March 21 & 22 (3 & 7pm), March 23 (10.30am, 2.30 & 6.30pm), March 24 (10.30am & 2.30pm) **ADMISSION:** \$25 - \$225, tickets from Singapore Indoor Stadium Box Office & SingPost outlets **TEL:** 3158-7888 **INFO:** www.sportshubtix.sg

OTHERS

National Gallery Singapore Open House
As part of Light To Night Festival

2019: Traces And Echoes, visitors will enjoy free admission to all exhibitions at National Gallery Singapore from Feb 22 to 24, including the exhibition Minimalism: Space. Light. Object. Immerse yourself in the specially commissioned installations and programmes that reimagine Singapore's past and offer fresh perspectives on significant moments in the past 700 years.
WHERE: National Gallery Singapore, 1 St Andrew's Road **MRT:** City Hall
WHEN: Feb 22 & 23 (10am - 10pm), Feb 24 (10am - 7pm) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** nationalgallery.sg

Sakura Matsuri At Gardens By The Bay
Say konnichiwa again to Sakura Matsuri, the popular cherry blossom festival that makes a return to Gardens by the Bay next month. Admire the ephemeral beauty of cherry blossoms and explore the food, costumes and products of Japan at Nippon Street. Also enjoy Japanese cultural programmes featuring instrumental and dance performances. The Anime Garden will bring Japanese animation to life.
WHERE: Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens Drive
MRT: Bayfront **WHEN:** March 1 - 31 (various dates & times)
ADMISSION: Ticket charges to Flower Dome applies **INFO:** gardensbythebay.com.sg/whatson

Natas Travel Fair
Natas Travel Fair 2019 promises to give

visitors a vast selection of travel choices such as tour packages, customised tours, cruises and many other options under one roof.
WHERE: Halls 5 & 6 Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive **MRT:** Expo **WHEN:** Feb 22 - 24, 10am - 9.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6534-0187 **INFO:** E-mail: events@natas.travel

Inter Airport South East Asia
This international exhibition for airport equipment, technology and design and services aims to deliver a vision of building better airports in South-east Asia.
WHERE: Hall 4A Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive **MRT:** Expo
WHEN: Feb 27 & 28 (10am - 5pm), March 1 (10am - 4pm)
ADMISSION: Free, register at rpg.infosalons.com.au/interairport19si **INFO:** E-mail info@interairport-southeastasia.com

HDFC India Homes Fair
More than 23 developers will be represented at the HDFC India Homes Fair. Properties available are priced from three million rupees (\$\$57,000).
WHERE: Singapore Swimming Club, 45 Tanjong Rhu Road
MRT: Mountbatten **WHEN:** March 9 & 10, 11am - 7.30pm
ADMISSION: Free **INFO:** hdfc.com

LAST CALL

Phonetics Workshop
Find out how phonetics can help you speak better and communicate more effectively. Children as young as nine

years old can join the class, which is conducted by Mr Joseph Wong, who specialises in communication, with a focus on phonetics.
WHERE: 05-01 LTC Building D, 16 Arumugam Road **MRT:** MacPherson
WHEN: Tomorrow, 9am - 6pm
ADMISSION: \$180, claimable through SkillsFuture Credit **INFO:** E-mail josephwong@delaproy.com.sg

Super Rugby – Sunwolves Vs Sharks
This year's Super Rugby season kicks off with a match between Singapore's adopted home team, Hito-Communications Sunwolves, which won their first match here last year, and South Africa's Sharks.
WHERE: National Stadium, Singapore Sports Hub, 1 Stadium Drive **MRT:** Stadium
WHEN: Tomorrow, 6.55 - 8.15pm
ADMISSION: From \$10 **INFO:** sportshub.com.sg/SuperRugby

• The listings on these Happenings pages are free. Write to Life Happenings, Life, The Straits Times, 1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore 318994 or e-mail stlife@sph.com.sg at least two weeks ahead. Include the name of the event, organiser, venue, date and time, ticket prices and nearest MRT station, as well as your name, address and contact number. We reserve the right to edit or reject items. Go to www.straitstimes.com (click on Lifestyle) for more listings.

FilmPicks

John Lui Film Correspondent recommends



COLD WAR (M18)
88 minutes/★★★★

This is a rare film in which everything gels so perfectly, the whole would collapse if one element were missing. In Poland, just after World War II, Zula (Joanna Kulig), a young singer with a troubled past, comes under the guidance of Wiktor (Tomasz Kot, both above), a composer and arranger with the job of making Polish folk music great again.
Polish director Pawel Pawlikowski tells the story of a doomed love affair with a deep understanding of theme, variation and repetition. Like the central song – sung in rustic style in the first act, then reborn as an aching torch song which might have flowed from the pen of Elvis Costello or the horn of Chet Baker – episodes in the lives of Zula and Wiktor play out, each marked by the same haunting motif, musically and emotionally.
It has been nominated in three categories (Best Foreign Language Film, Best Director, Best Cinematography) at the Academy Awards.



THE FAVOURITE (R21)
120 minutes/★★★★

In this bawdy, smart and fast-paced period drama, director Yorgos Lanthimos throws away the grand halls, costumes and soldiers so common in films of the genre. Here, two women fight to manipulate a third for power. That there is a lesbian triangle at its centre is a secondary, but important, element in the mix.
It is the early 18th century and Queen Anne (Olivia Colman) is crippled by illness and grieving over 17 children, all stillborn, miscarried or dead in infancy. Her lover and adviser is Lady Sarah Churchill (Rachel Weisz), from whom she derives both confidence and guidance about Britain's expensive war with other European nations. Into the household comes Abigail Hill (Emma Stone), a woman from a decayed branch of the English aristocracy, who is taken in as a scullery maid.
The film is up for 10 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actress for Colman and Best Supporting Actress for Stone and Weisz.



THE KILLING OF A SACRED DEER (M18)
121 minutes/★★★★

Brought back to mark the 10 Oscar nominations earned by director Yorgos Lanthimos' The Favourite, this is his previous work, a creepy tale of supernatural retribution.
Heart surgeon Steven Murphy (Colin Farrell, right) seems to have taken a fatherly interest in teenager Martin (Barry Keoghan). The young man is fixated on Steven, his wife Anna (Nicole Kidman, left), teenage daughter Kim (Raffey Cassidy) and young son Bob (Sunny Suljic). As Martin's behaviour grows more odd, Steven breaks off the relationship, but his decision carries an otherworldly penalty.
That juxtaposition of the mundane and the nightmarishly mythic is constantly at play in this movie, winner of the Best Screenplay award at the Cannes Film Festival and nominee for the top prize of the Palme d'Or for director and co-screenwriter Lanthimos.
WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Sunday, 7.50pm **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 **INFO:** theprojector.sg

PHOTOS:
AMAZON STUDIOS,
ANTICIPATE
PICTURES,
TWENTIETH
CENTURY FOX

Flexing her muscles for Captain Marvel



The cast of Captain Marvel (from far left) Gemma Chan, Samuel L. Jackson and Brie Larson, together with the film's directors, Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, at a press conference at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre yesterday. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Actress Brie Larson pushed a jeep uphill to play the titular role in the superhero film

Benson Ang

To play a superhero fighting aliens in space, Hollywood star Brie Larson trained every day for nine months. She did judo, lifted weights and once, she even pushed a jeep uphill. "To see what I was made of and how strong I could get," said the 29-year-old. Together with her co-stars Gemma Chan and Samuel L. Jackson, as well as the movie's directors,

Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck, the blonde star was in town yesterday to promote the upcoming Marvel Studios' film, Captain Marvel, which opens on March 7. In the superhero movie set in the 1990s, Larson plays Carol Danvers, who becomes one of the universe's most powerful heroes and finds herself at the centre of a galactic war between two alien races. At a press conference at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention Centre, before an estimated 350 members of the media from countries such as Japan and New Zealand, the star, dressed in a long, flowing beige dress, effortlessly commanded the room with her strikingly confident demeanour. The actress won the Academy Award for Best Actress in 2015 for

her role as a locked-up young mother in the drama Room. She said of the preparation process for Captain Marvel: "It changed my mind. It changed the way I viewed the world, especially martial arts." For example, once Larson started doing more judo, she said: "I was like, 'Oh, that guy has a gym jacket on. I could totally throw him right now.'" The actress certainly relishes the tough training. She said: "There is something about pushing yourself beyond a threshold that is comfortable, then going even further. "It was these moments of that breakthrough of going beyond what you thought was possible, what you thought your body was capable of doing."

Chan, 36, who was socialite Astrid in last year's movie Crazy Rich Asians, describes the geneticist Doctor Minerva she plays in Captain Marvel as sarcastic and having many sassy one-liners. She said the two roles "really couldn't be further apart". To portray the latter, she too had to challenge herself physically, and had to do kick-boxing as well as undergo sniper training. "The main thing... I had to be concerned about (while filming) was trying not to hit myself in the face with my own rifle." For Jackson, 70, playing a younger version of Nick Fury, from the fictional peacekeeping and spy agency S.H.I.E.L.D., meant he did not have to put on the character's distinctive scar and eye patch.

"It was kind of interesting being that guy (the younger version). Along with having two eyes, (my character has) a lot less instinct than the older Nick Fury." Appropriately enough for a movie about female power, Boden is the first woman director to helm a Marvel superhero movie. She said the experience has been "really amazing", but added: "It is 2019. "I think everybody here looks forward to the day when it is not newsworthy that a woman is directing this kind of movie."

bang@sph.com.sg

• Captain Marvel opens on March 7.

More directing roles for Ben Affleck as he hangs up Batman's costume for good?

LOS ANGELES • For the man who had become one of Hollywood's hottest directors, almost nothing went as it was supposed to go. Six years ago, Ben Affleck was flying high. After revivifying his career by directing Gone Baby Gone (2007) and The Town (2010), and receiving his second Oscar (for co-producing 2013's Best Picture winner Argo), he decided to enter the DC superhero universe. The actor and film-maker would step into the Batsuit for a new phase of team-up films and, possibly, even direct some of them. Two weeks ago, Affleck tweeted confirmation that he was exiting his

run as the Caped Crusader – with little to show for those mostly lost years in the Batcave. Perhaps if only George Clooney, a fellow Argo producer, had warned him at an Oscars after-party then about the perils of donning the Gotham Spandex. Clooney, fortunately, got back on track with 1998's acclaimed Out Of Sight one year after his turn in director Joel Schumacher's infamously laughable Batman & Robin (1997), a movie so mocked that live-action Batman went dormant for most of the next decade, until director Christopher Nolan and actor Christian Bale came to the screen character's rescue.

Affleck's years in the black-costumed, green-screened wilderness were nothing so camp, by contrast. The actor was mostly solid if not stolid – but his career seemed almost entombed by the suit, and all the DC machinery that came with it. As DC tried to compete with Marvel Studios by making big team-up films, Affleck soon found himself stuck in unwieldy and ill-conceived, overblown and overpriced superhero vehicles – much of it guided by director Zack Snyder. 2016's Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice, co-starring a less-than-transcendent Henry Cavill and a miscast Jesse Eisenberg, received mixed reviews and grossed US\$874 million worldwide – not quite the billion-dollar take that had come to be expected with big superhero team-ups. The film's main bright spot was the too-brief debut of Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman.

The next year, Snyder's Justice League performed even worse with critics and audiences, grossing US\$658 million worldwide – including a dismal US\$229 million on domestic shores. Affleck's Batman also appeared in 2016's Suicide Squad – a critical dud that felt only half-completed, yet largely buoyed by actress Margot Robbie's inspired turn as Harley Quinn – which grossed nearly US\$750 million worldwide on a US\$175 million budget. But this year, all signals point to a continued major shift for the DC universe. Last month at the Sundance Film Festival, Wonder Woman (2017) director Patty Jenkins said she would like to see DC give its solo-character franchises more time to grow and deepen before emphasising team-up films again. In other words, do not keep playing by Marvel's template. This follows the news last September that Warner Bros would move



Ben Affleck as Bruce Wayne, who is Batman in disguise, in Justice League (2017). PHOTO: WARNER BROS

on from Cavill as its Superman, seven years after he accepted the three-movie gig. Now, the next long-planned solo Batman movie will not have Affleck on board as actor or director. Matt Reeves inherited the director's chair two years ago; he is also writing the film. Last month, the next solo Batman movie's release date was announced – June 25, 2021 – and Deadline.com reports that the movie will centre on a younger Bruce Wayne. Affleck will be nearly 49 upon the movie's scheduled release. This is good news for Affleck, whose run as Batman had taken on shades of missed-opportunity melancholy, as captured by a "Sad Affleck" meme from DC junkie footage. Affleck has shown a flair for making thrillers and he has long been attached to direct the Agatha Christie story, Witness For The Prosecution. Finally, hope is raised that Affleck will rejoin the ranks of more interesting directors, now that the Dark Knight's cape is mothballed as tightly as Affleck's desire to play superheroes. WASHINGTON POST

No live telecast of this year's Oscars in Singapore

When the Academy Awards are handed out on Feb 24 in Los Angeles (Feb 25 morning in Singapore), viewers in Singapore will not be able to watch it live on television because no broadcaster has stepped up to carry the show. Cable channel HBO, which screened the Oscars live over the last four editions, has decided not to do so this year. As at press time, HBO Asia did not reply to questions from The Straits Times. StarHub TV and Singtel TV said their cable channels are not showing the event.

A spokesman for broadcaster Mediacorp also confirmed that it will not be carrying either a live or delayed telecast of the show, which is usually close to four hours in length. According to StarHub, the show has been telecast live in Singapore at least since 2011. Based on reports from Hollywood, one reason for the lack of enthusiasm for the show is falling viewership, which has led to changes aimed at tightening the programme, some of which have been controversial. While there are no reliable global viewership figures available, in the United States, viewership for last year's ceremony fell to its lowest figure, 26.6 million viewers, a 19 per cent drop from the previous year. However, the show still ranks as the most-watched non-sports live broadcast in the US, with many tuning in not just to see if their favourites win, but to watch the stars, fashion, jokes and live performances. Outside the US, viewership for the

star-studded live event is hampered by time-zone differences. When it takes place on Sunday evening in Los Angeles, in Singapore, it is Monday morning. Film fans and professionals in the film industry here were disappointed to hear they would have to miss a beloved annual ritual. Film distribution company United International Pictures has three of its films in the running: comedy BlackKkKlansman, biopic First Man and period drama Mary, Queen Of Scots, due to open here on Feb 28. Its managing director, Ms Flora Goh, calls it "a pity" that neither fans nor professionals here will be able to watch the show live. "Many of us in the film industry look forward to celebrating the best films of the year by watching the Oscars live and feeling the excitement." "Not only is the event a tribute to film-makers, but it also serves as a wonderful source of inspiration for everyone to excel in their craft," she said. Film-maker Eric Khoo (Ramen Teh, 2018; In The Room, 2015) makes it a point to watch the show every year, with a fast-food treat by his side. Without a live telecast, the fun of making wagers is also gone. "It's terrible that there will not be a broadcast. I watch it every year with a KFC meal," he said.

- Get updates on Oscar results on Twitter @ST_LifeTweets from 9am on Feb 25.
- Go to oscar.go.com for more information

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Comics

BABY BLUES



GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
10.00 Films & Stars (PG) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Martha Bakes 7 (IE)
12.30 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 4 (SC)
2.30 Talking Point 2018 (CA)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.00 Rojak (PG) (SC)
4.30 Survivor 36 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.40 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
6.30 Just For Laughs Gags 18 (V)
6.45 Aliens In The Attic (PG) (CC) (M)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 On The Red Dot – Risky Business (CA)
10.00 The Monuments Men (PG) (M) (Premiere)
AM
12.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
1.00 Lion Moms (PG13) (D)
2.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
2.50 Hawaii Five-O 7 (PG) (D)
3.40 Lethal Weapon (PG13) (D)
4.00 Gordon Ramsay's Ultimate Cookery Course (IE)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (PG) (IE)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 The Next (V)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (CA)
8.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Focus (CC) (CA)
10.30 The Fairy Couple (Chinese Opera)
11.30 How Are You? (PG) (CC) (D)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)

1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 118 (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Cookie Master (SC)
2.30 The Precedents (PG) (D)
3.30 Golden Age Talentime (HD) (CC) (V)
4.30 Taste Of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 When Duty Calls (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Body SOS 7 (CC) (V)
8.30 The Best Of Food Source 3 (CC) (V)
9.00 Walk With Me (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Food and Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (CC) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyoung (PG) (D)
1.00 Lady Investigators (D)
2.00 Fiery Passion (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Chinese Dating (V)
4.30 King Of The Kitchens (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Girl Who Sees Smells (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Hello Taiwan (IE)
10.00 Brother's Keeper 2 (PG13) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Hello Taiwan (IE)
AM
12.30 My Father Is Strange (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Champions For Change
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Insight
2.00 News Now
4.02 Bridging The Skills Gap: Beyond Classrooms
5.00 News Now
7.02 Wild City (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia

9.02 Market Insights (CC)
9.30 Conversation With (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Insight
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Asia Business First Weekend
1.02 Conversation With
1.30 Super Octogenarians
2.00 News Now
2.30 Correspondents' Diary
3.02 Champions For Change
4.00 News Now
4.30 Correspondents' Diary
5.02 Conversation With
5.30 Super Octogenarians
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Anjaraipetti 5 (IE)
4.00 Priyasakhi
4.30 Thedal – Star Search 2016 (HD) (V)
6.00 Suryaputhri 2 (Malayalam) (D)
7.00 Arinuth Ariyaamalum (S)
7.30 Janani D/O Madhavan (CC) (S)
8.00 Uyire (PG) (CC) (D)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Indian Beat 9 (HD) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Gokulathil Seethai (PG) (CC) (M)
AM
12.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
1.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Tip The Mouse (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Mouk (P)
11.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)
PM
12.00 Hiccup & Sneeze (P)
12.30 Teddies (P)
1.00 Coconut The Little Dragon (P)
1.30 Tip The Mouse (P)
2.00 Guess How Much I Love You (P)
2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Mouk (P)
3.30 Ready Jet Go! (P)

4.00 Odd Squad (HD) (S)
4.30 Captain Flinn And The Pirate Dinosaurs (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Marcus Level (HD) (S)
6.00 The New Powerpuff Girls (S)
6.30 Whoopie's World (PG) (D)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Turning Mecard (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (CC) (S)
9.00 Tryfactor (CC) (Sports)
9.30 One Championship – One Warrior Series 2 (HD) (Sports)
10.00 One Championships: Quest For Gold (Yangon) (PG13) (Sports)
AM
1.10 One Championships Weekly (HD) (PG13) (Sports)
1.40 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Bibik-Bibikku (PG) (D)
5.00 Kultus (CC) (D)
6.00 Kem Tahan (IE)
6.30 Taste Selebriti (CC) (IE)
7.00 Maknum Yang Paling Aku Cinta (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Mamaku Sayang (CC) (S)
9.00 Generasi Merdeka: Tangan Yang Membentuk Negara (IE)
9.30 Adakah Aku Bersalah (PG) (CC) (Telemovie)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs; CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture; D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies; P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance; R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom; V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 - April 19)
You need to let people see how you feel – do not be shy about reacting.

Taurus (April 20 - May 20)
Try your best to boost your feelings of security, no matter how down you may feel in the morning.

Gemini (May 21 - June 20)
You have to stretch every dollar, even if you feel rich. Your finances are tighter than you think.

Cancer (June 21 - July 22)
Your energy levels are through the roof, so get out there and tackle new projects.

Leo (July 23 - Aug 22)
Let your subconscious mind take over and guide you to your goal.

Virgo (Aug 23 - Sept 22)
You need to exercise your social energy – that could mean going to a party or making a new friend.

Libra (Sept 23 - Oct 22)
You are at a weird stage, but should be able to get past it as long as you can find a way to keep your cool.

Scorpio (Oct 23 - Nov 21)
Step up and make sure people are on your side and doing their part.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 - Dec 21)
Get in deeper with your friends or loved ones – your energy does not let you tolerate nonsense.

Capricorn (Dec 22 - Jan 19)
Your energy is just right for turning your living space into something sweeter.

Aquarius (Jan 20 - Feb 18)
Just because today is not all that great, does not mean you have to suffer tomorrow.

Pisces (Feb 19 - March 20)
Your emotional energy is perfect for getting people together and making them see how great life can be.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Weekdays With Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Weekdays With Charmaine Yee
4.00 On The Drive Home With Shan Wee
8.00 Joshi's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 Glenn & The Flying Dutchman
10.00 The Middy Brew With Charmaine Phua
PM
1.00 Afternoon Tune Up With Cheryl Miles
4.00 The Weekday Getaway With Divian Nair
8.00 Love Songs With Simon Lim

MONEY FM 89.3

AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker & Finance Presenter Ryan Huang
10.00 Middy With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kemlin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.17am/7.21pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 3.06pm/2.41am

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 5.58am (2.6m), 1.15pm (0.9m), 8.45pm (2.2m). Desaru: 4.46am (2.3m), 12.18pm (1.1m), 7.56pm (2.4m). Port Dickson: 2.28am (2m), 8.57am (1.1m), 2.20pm (1.6m), 9.08pm (0.7m). Mersing: 4am (2.4m), 11.17am (1.1m), 7.17pm (2.8m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 1.20am (1.7m), 7.20am (2.6m), 2.24pm (0.7m), 9.58pm (2.4m). Desaru: 1.22am (2m), 5.54am (2.3m), 1.33pm (1m), 9.28pm (2.5m). Port Dickson: 4.02am (2.2m), 10.37am (1m), 4.10pm (1.8m), 10.46pm (0.5m). Mersing: 1.20am (2.1m), 5.05am (2.3m), 12.24pm (1m), 8.30pm (3m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
9.30 Forged In Fire 5
10.25 History Drama: Knightfall
11.20 The Warfighters
PM
12.15 The Curse Of Oak Island 4
1.10 Swamp People 8
2.05 History Drama: Knightfall
3.00 Storage Wars 11
3.30 The Warfighters
4.25 Forged In Fire: Knife Or Death
5.20 Forged In Fire 5
6.15 Swamp People 8
7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 5
8.30 Storage Wars 11
9.00 Mountain Men 7
9.55 Alone 4
10.50 Swamp Mysteries With Troy Landry
11.45 The Curse Of Oak Island 4

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
9.00 Gok's Fill Your House For Free
10.00 Growing Up Supermodel
11.00 Atlanta Plastic 2
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 7
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Harry & Meghan: A Royal Romance
4.00 Born This Way 2
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2
7.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
8.00 The Rap Game 3
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Snowed Inn Christmas
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown 2

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
9.50 La La Land
11.55 Loving Pablo (NC16)
PM
1.55 Crashing 3 (NC16)
2.55 Valentine's Day
4.55 The Good Dinosaur
6.30 Transformers: The Last Knight (NC16)
9.00 Ready Player One (NC16)
11.20 Robin Hood
AM
1.35 The Manchurian Candidate (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
6.40 Spy Kids 3: Game Over
8.00 Play Misty For Me
9.40 All The Way (NC16)
11.50 The Disappearance (NC16)
PM
12.35 The Godfather Part 2
3.50 The One (PG)
5.15 Dragnet
7.00 Basilisk: The Serpent King

8.30 Killing Gunther (NC16)
10.00 The Amityville Horror (M18)
11.30 John Wick: Chapter 2 (M18)
AM
1.30 Catwoman

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 Super Boys 2 (HD)
11.45 Fun Abroad (HD)
PM
12.15 Still Loving You (HD)
1.30 Signal (HD)
2.45 Sound Of My Dream 2 (HD)
4.45 Still Loving You (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 16 (HD)
8.00 Mr Player 7 (HD)
10.00 Singer 2019 (Live) (HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
9.30 Tennis: Deuce
10.00 ATP 500 ABN Amro World Tennis Tournament: Day 4 Last 16
PM
6.30 Tennis: Federation Cup By BNP Paribas First Round: Czech Republic Vs Romania: Highlights
7.30 ATP 500 ABN Amro World Tennis Tournament: Day 5 Quarter-finals 1
11.30 Tennis: ATP World Tour Uncovered
AM
12.00 Mountain Bike: Crankworx World Tour 2018: Les Gets Highlights

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
9.30 National Basketball League – NBL Slam
10.00 National Basketball League Round 18: New Zealand Breakers Vs Illawarra Hawks
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League: Westports Malaysia Dragons Vs CLS Knights Indonesia
2.30 Football: EFL Championships 2018 Matchday 31: Nottingham Forest Vs Brentford
4.30 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
6.00 Magazine: The Burning Issue
6.30 Magazine: Trans World Sport
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
8.00 Asean Basketball League: Zuhai Wolf Warriors Vs San Miguel Alab Pilipinas (Live)
10.00 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
11.00 Fiba World Basketball
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
AM
12.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
1.30 National Basketball League Round 18: New Zealand Breakers Vs Illawarra Hawks
3.30 Magazine: Omnisport.TV
3.40 Football: EFL League One 2018 Matchday 33: Sunderland Vs Accrington Stanley (Live)

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernnoobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 Craig Of The Creek
3.00 Rat-A-Tat
3.30 The Amazing World Of Gumball
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 Craig Of The Creek
6.00 Apple & Onion
6.30 Unikitty
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
7.55 The Heroic Quest Of The Valiant Prince Ivandoe
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 Transformers: Cyberverse
9.30 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 MacGyver 2
6.50 Seal Team
7.40 American Ninja Warrior 7
9.25 MacGyver 2
10.20 Seal Team
11.10 The Amazing Race Asia 5
PM
1.00 Quantico 3
1.55 American Ninja Warrior 7
2.50 MacGyver 2
3.45 Seal Team
4.35 The Amazing Race Asia 5
6.25 MacGyver 3
7.15 Instinct
8.10 Lakeview Terrace
10.20 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 The Carbonaro Effect 2
6.50 Major Crimes 5
7.40 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
8.25 Person Of Interest 4
9.15 The Flash 4
10.05 The Carbonaro Effect 2
10.55 Almost Genius
11.45 Hall Pass
PM
1.30 The Big Bang Theory 11

1.55 Friends 9
2.20 The Carbonaro Effect 2
3.10 Almost Genius
4.00 The Flash 4
4.50 Person Of Interest 4
5.40 Major Crimes 5
6.30 The Flash 4
7.20 The Big Bang Theory 11
7.45 Friends 9
8.10 The Big Bang Theory 12
8.35 Young Sheldon 2
9.00 Gotham 5
9.50 Superman Returns

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.55 Just For Laughs Gags 14
7.20 Mr Bean
7.50 Most Ridiculous 2
8.15 Amazingness
8.35 Mr Bean
9.05 Karaoke Showdown
9.30 Just For Laughs Gags 14
9.55 Hot In Cleveland 2
10.40 Mr Bean
11.10 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.00 The Daily Show 24
12.25 The Goldbergs 5
1.15 Hot In Cleveland 6
2.05 Saturday Night Live 43
2.55 The Burn With Jeff Ross 2
3.15 Jeff Ross Presents Roast Battle 3
4.05 Above Average Presents
4.15 The Goldbergs 5
5.05 Hot In Cleveland 6
5.55 The Daily Show 24
6.20 Your Face Or Mine 4
6.45 Amazingness
7.05 Billy On The Street 3
7.30 Most Ridiculous 2
8.20 Mr Bean
8.50 The Goldbergs 5
9.40 Hot In Cleveland 6
10.25 Inglorious Pranksters
10.35 Inside Amy Schumer
10.55 Above Average Presents
11.00 The Jim Jefferies Show
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Taste Of Love
7.00 First Love
8.00 King Of Blaze
9.00 Eagle And Youngster
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 King Of Blaze
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 King Of Blaze
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

Robinson defends J Lo's Motown tribute

NEW YORK • Smokey Robinson has raised the alarm. Did dissenters – upset over the choice of Jennifer Lopez, and not a black singer, to helm a Motown tribute in the Grammys show on Sunday – want to roll back the gains made by black artists a hundred years?

"Stop hating," he urged. "Motown united people, not divided them."

The Motown legend himself took part in the performance on Sunday alongside Lopez and singer Ne-Yo.

"On the very first day of Motown, (founder) Berry Gordy told the five of us who were present, 'I'm gonna start my own record company and we're gonna make music for everybody and always be sure to make quality music that the world can enjoy,'" Robinson wrote online on Tuesday.

"And through the grace of God and hard work and determination, we accomplished that. Kids of all races, worldwide, grew up loving the music of Motown, imitating our acts."

Sunday's tribute commemorated the 60th anniversary of Motown, the record label immortalised by a slew of iconic acts including Diana Ross, The Jackson 5, The Temptations and Marvin Gaye.

But many questioned why Lopez was the selection to honour Motown, including author Roxane Gay, who tweeted: "How does J Lo, pop dance queen, get tapped to lead a Motown tribute when black women exist?"

Robinson on Tuesday praised Motown for breaking racial barriers.

"So now you're gonna try to diminish the scope of Motown and narrow it down to just music for black people and you call yourself defending the image of Motown," he wrote.



Motown legend Smokey Robinson performing with Jennifer Lopez at the Grammys on Sunday. The singer of Puerto Rican descent was slammed by netizens for helming a Motown tribute at the awards ceremony as she is not black.

PHOTO: REUTERS

"Well you're trying to set us back a hundred years. J Lo was great and we at Motown love her. The beauty of Motown is that we're a family made up of black, white, Hispanic

and Asian women and men."

He had even been more scathing in his comments before Sunday's showcase, telling trade publication Variety: "I don't think anyone who

is intelligent is upset. I think anyone who is upset is stupid."

Following the performance at the Grammys ceremony, Lopez, who is of Puerto Rican descent, defended

her involvement in it as well.

"The thing about music is that it inspires all. Any type of music can inspire any type of artist," she told Entertainment Tonight.

"You can't tell people what to love. You can't tell people what they can and can't do, what they should sing or not sing. You got to do what's in your heart." DPA

Seven women accuse musician Ryan Adams of sex misconduct

NEW YORK • A woman alleges that musician Ryan Adams had phone sex with her when she was underage.

Adams – who has also being accused of sexual misconduct by six other women – has responded, tweeting that he is "not a perfect man and I have made many mistakes".

"To anyone I have ever hurt, however unintentionally, I apologise deeply and unreservedly."

The seven women accused the singer-songwriter, who has seven Grammy nominations, in a story published on Wednesday by the New York Times.

But Adams, 44, said: "But the picture that this article paints is upsettingly inaccurate. I would never have inappropriate interactions with someone I thought was underage. Period."

Adams has been active in the music scene for nearly three decades, but found the most success

in a solo career that began in 2000.

He has parlayed his track record of releasing 16 albums to champion other artists.

The seven women, including ex-wife, singer-actress Mandy Moore, 34; and singer-songwriter Phoebe Bridgers, 24; said this "rock-star patronage" drew attention away from his manipulative behaviour.

A woman referred to in the article as Ava, who corresponded with Adams on social media, said he used to send her explicit messages when she was underage.

Bridgers was 20 when she visited his studio in 2014, where she said he gave her an expensive guitar and began to send her flirty texts.

Their short-lived relationship became emotionally abusive when he frequently demanded to know where she was and threatened suicide if she did not respond to his texts quickly.

Moore, who stars on hit NBC series This Is Us (2016 to present),



met him in 2007, when she was most known for her teen-pop music and roles in movies such as The Princess Diaries (2001) and Chasing Liberty (2004).

They got married in 2009. She said he would belittle her, saying that she was not a real musician because "you don't know how to play

an instrument".

"His controlling behaviour essentially did block my ability to make new connections in the industry during a very pivotal and potentially lucrative time – my entire mid-to-late 20s," said Moore, who divorced Adams in 2016.

WASHINGTON POST



Ex-wife and singer-actress Mandy Moore (above) was among the seven women who accused Ryan Adams (left) of manipulative behaviour.

PHOTOS: NYTIMES

Blackpink fans slam ABC over caption blunder

LOS ANGELES • Fans of Blackpink were not tickled pink when the people at American broadcast network ABC captioned a clip of the South Korean girl group's performance, saying they were singing in Japanese.

The gaffe occurred when the quartet were performing their hit song Ddu-du Ddu-du on Tuesday on the Good Morning America show, reported the allpop portal.

One fan wrote online: "This is so disrespectful. Do they not know the meaning of K-pop?"

There was no excuse for the error, others felt, since the group had already performed a day earlier on CBS' The Late Show With Stephen Colbert.

That outing had drawn many fans to catch the group's arrival at the Ed Sullivan Theatre in New York, where the show was hosted, despite it being late in the evening.

Then, Blackpink had been introduced to the studio audience as "a wildly popular K-pop group who announced their first US tour today and are making their American television debut tonight".

Blackpink, whose Singapore concert today is sold out, have also made history, tapped as one of the headliners at the prestigious Coachella music festival in Indio, California, on April 12 and 19.

On social media

CAPTAIN MARVEL STARS HAVE A BLAST IN SINGAPORE: Gemma Chan (far right) has put her knowledge of Singapore to good use. The actress, who was here in 2017 to shoot scenes for romantic comedy Crazy Rich Asians, is back in town to promote the Captain Marvel movie, which she co-stars in with Brie Larson (right).

On Wednesday, Chan, 36, took Larson, 29, to Newton Food Centre to feast on satay and barbecued chicken wings, among other items. Larson later posted online her gratitude to Chan, playing tourist guide, captioning a photo: "Look who I found!!! The super beauty inside and out @gemma_chan. Thank you for showing me around Singapore."

Chan herself posted the same photo, writing: "Ahoy Captain! Very happy to be back in Singapore, especially with this one... beautiful smile, beautiful heart."

Chan did not venture too far beyond the comforts of her hotel, content to post photos of the sunset from Marina Bay Sands' infinity pool and noting: "Back to where it all began." The hotel was featured in Crazy Rich Asians (2018).

But Larson made sure she did enough activities to write home about, including having lunch at Peranakan eatery Guan Hoe Soon in Joo Chiat and visiting the ArtScience Museum and Gardens by the Bay. In a photo of herself jumping in joy in her hotel room, she captioned: "I'm in Singapore for the first time and loving it."

That picture has drawn more than 155,000 likes – a reflection of how many others also feel that the Republic is a marvel to behold.

PHOTO: GEMMA CHAN/INSTAGRAM



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What's trending for travel
in the US and beyond



Lee Siew Hua
Travel Writer,
The Straits Times



Richard Launder
President and CEO
of Destination
America and Director
of The Travel
Corporation USA

Central Public Library
100 Victoria Street
B1-01 Programme Zone

Friday, Feb 15, 2019
7 to 8.30pm
(Registration starts at 6pm)

Sign up at
<http://str.sg/askSiewHua3>

For more information, go to www.straitstimes.com/askst